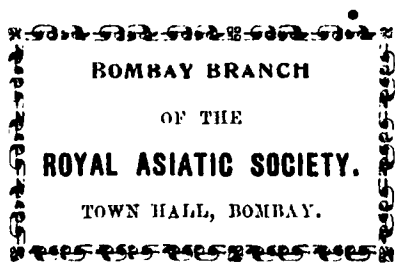




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**COLONEL
GRODEKOFF'S RIDE TO HERAT.**

COLONEL GRODEKOFF'S RIDE
FROM
SAMARCAND TO HERAT,
THROUGH
BALKH AND THE UZBEK STATES
OF
AFGHAN TURKESTAN ;

WITH HIS OWN MAP OF THE MARCH-ROUTE FROM THE

OXUS TO HERAT.

BY

CHARLES MARVIN,

AUTHOR OF "THE DISASTROUS RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE AKHAL TEKKE
TURCOMANS," "OUR PUBLIC OFFICERS," ETC.

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"There can be hardly a doubt that the whole of Northern Afghanistan, from the Oxus to the Hindoo Koosh, will, by the force of circumstances, become included within the sphere of the immediate influence of Russia."—Colonel L. Seboieff, St. Petersburg, April, 1880.

"The frontier on the Oxus ought to constitute, as in antiquity, not only the political, but also the ethnical frontier."—Arminius Vămbéry, London, April, 1880.

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Н. Гродекков

COLONEL N. GRODEKOFF

Dedicated,
WITH SINCERE ESTEEM,
TO MY FRIEND
RICHARD KEMP.

PREFACE.

Colonel N. Grodekoff's account of his Ride to Herat is entirely his own. All I have done is to translate the narrative, and to divide it into chapters. The Map of his march-route is a *fac-simile* of one he sent me a short time ago, together with his portrait. His statement that Merv is not the Key of Herat, and the description he gives of the state of affairs in the region desolated by the Turcoman scourge, deserve the attention of English writers on Central Asia.

CHARLTON, KENT,
June, 1880.

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INTRODUCTION.

ON the 19th of January, 1879, the *Novoe Vremya* furnished a fresh topic for political conversation at St. Petersburg, by publishing the following paragraph:—"From the time that the first Russian soldier stepped on Turkestan soil, that region has been the scene of many daring exploits and expeditions, many of which, however, remain unknown to Russian society. A few days ago, there arrived at St. Petersburg Colonel Grodekoff, of the General Staff, who has just performed a journey, the extraordinary hazards and difficulties attending which far exceed anything that has hitherto been done in that way. It will suffice to say that Colonel Grodekoff, without even resorting to any disguise, accompanied by a Kirghiz and two Persians, one of whom, Teimur Mustapha Rakhmetulin, acted as interpreter, traversed all the north-western provinces of Afghanistan to Herat, through places constantly exposed to raids from the Tekkes, and over the whole of Northern Persia. On the 6th November last this intrepid officer left Tashkent, and on the 15th of December reached

Asterabad, having traversed a distance of nearly 1,500 miles."

This information, with several additional particulars, appeared in the *Globe* on the 28th January, *i.e.* five days before Lord Loftus's despatch, containing a translation of the *Novoe Vremya* paragraph, reached the Foreign Office.*

On the 6th February, or three days after Lord Loftus's despatch arrived at Downing Street, the Marquis of Salisbury received a letter from our Minister at Teheran, dated December 10, 1878, in which, among other matters, was stated as under:—"I have the honour to inform your Lordship that a Russian officer, whose name resembles Kerdinhoff, reached Meshed on the 27th ultimo, having come from Tashkent, *via* Balkh and Herat. Two hundred Afghan horse escorted him through the Herat territory. He only remained three days at Herat, but was twelve days at Balkh. On his arrival at Meshed he telegraphed to the Russian General at Tashkent, informing him that he had been received at Herat in a most satisfactory and cordial manner. He appeared to be going on immediately to Russia, by way of the Caspian Sea."

The same day a second despatch was received from Mr. Ronald Thomson, dated December 17, and containing the sub-joined additional particulars respecting Grodekoff:—"The Russian officer, of whose movements I had the honour to inform

* Blue Book "Central Asia No. 1. (1880)."

your Lordship in my despatch of the 10th instant, started from Meshed on the 30th of November. While there, it is said that he stated that he had left St. Petersburg on a special mission at the end of last September, and that he was going back there at once; that when at Balkh he had come across the Envoy despatched by the Government of His Majesty the Czar, on his return from Afghanistan, and that from him he had heard that Ameer Shere Ali Khan had stated that should he find himself unable to withstand the advance of the British army, as might possibly be the case, he had the intention of retiring to the hill country."

Accompanying these two despatches arrived also a third, on the 6th February, from Mr. Ronald Thomson, dated Teheran, December 31, and containing two translated enclosures received from the English news-writer at Meshed. One of these was dated December 7, 1878, and ran as follows:—

"Eight days ago the Russian officer left for Asterabad; he sent back a Cossack, native of Khokand or Tashkent, who had been travelling with him to Meshed, giving him a passport to the effect that the bearer was his servant and returning home, and that therefore no one was to prevent or molest him. The officer said that the Afghan troops were not disciplined, but merely an imitation; that he met the Russian Envoy at Balkh returning from Cabul; and he said that Ameer Shere Ali had told him that whenever the English troops marched against him, as he is unable to resist them, he would take

to the mountains; he (the officer) had further added that he had left St. Petersburg two months previously, and that he was now returning there direct; that for 300 farsakhs of the road between Orenburg to Tashkent there is no railway, but there is a cart road by which the post arrives in eight days at Tashkent, and that the railway will be finished in another year." *

The second communication, dated a week later, referred chiefly to Cabul affairs, but it contained one or two particulars respecting Grodekoff. "The fourth Russian officer came to Maimene and thence to Herat. His journey had been notified by the Ameer to the Herat authorities, instructing them to pay him every attention. He arrived at Herat on the 16th of November, and was received with much ceremony. Quarters were prepared for him in the Chehar Bagh, the Governor's own residence. He only remained there three days, and then asked for an escort to convey him to the Persian frontier, *en route* for Meshed. This was granted, and took him as far as Kareez. I presume he was an officer of high standing in Russia, but here he did not give out his rank or who he was at all; he did not discuss any political topics with the Governor; it appears that he merely came to visit the place. On reaching Meshed he intends proceeding to Russia *via* Gez."

The letter bag from Teheran received at the Foreign Office

* Grodekoff could never have made such a preposterous statement as this about the railway. Our Blue Books would excite less ridicule if they were carefully weeded of such obvious *canards*—C. M.

on the 6th February contained a final despatch from Mr. Ronald Thomson, dated December 31, with the annexed item from the English news-writer at Asterabad. "December 24. On the 17th a Russian officer arrived here from Meshed *via* Shahrood. He remained two days at the Russian Consul's house, and then left for Ashoorada by Gez. This officer has been to Herat." *

Shortly after Colonel Grodekoff's return to St. Petersburg, the Czar, displaying an appreciation of intrepidity which might advantageously be imitated by our own Sovereigns when our Burnabys and MacGregors come back from their rides into the dark region of Central Asia, gave the gallant staff-officer a private audience at the Winter Palace, and presented him with a decoration, which, all will admit, after reading his narrative, the Colonel fully deserved.

The Russian Government attached such importance to Grodekoff's knowledge of Herat and Afghan Turkestan, that he was not allowed to return again to his duties at Tashkent, but was kept, for purposes of consultation, at St. Petersburg.

Recently he received orders to keep himself in readiness to proceed to the Caspian to join Skobelev's expedition against the Akhal Tekke Turcomans. One result of this was that the narrative of his journey through Afghanistan was greatly abridged, and, unfortunately, that portion suffered the most from curtailment which, otherwise, would have rendered

* Blue Book "Central Asia No. 1. (1880.)"

Colonel Grodekoff's ride as popular, perhaps, in this country, as Major Burnaby's ride to Khiva.

Early in May he set out from St. Petersburg for the Caspian, and a Russian letter from Fort Alexandroosk mentions, that among the officers who arrived there on the 13th, with Adjutant General Skobeleff, to inspect the place, was Colonel Grodekoff. His desire to visit Merv thus stands a good chance of being gratified at no distant date.

COLONEL GRODEKOFF'S RIDE FROM SAMARCAND TO HERAT.

CHAPTER I.

FROM TASHKENT TO MAZAR-E-SHEREEF.

My interview with General Kaufmann—I set out on my ride to the Caspian—My followers—No masquerading—Arrival at the River Oxus—Patta Keesar—Courtesy of the Afghan Envoy—I cross over to Afghanistan—The Eeshagasi—Text of the pass furnished me by General Kaufmann—"In Russia one law: in Afghanistan, another"—Afghan prisoners from Cabul—My "row" with the Eeshagasi—We set out for Mazar-e-Shereef—The ruins of Seeyageerd—Incidents of the ride—I find myself guarded—The Afghans discuss whether they shall murder me—Arrival at Mazar-e-Shereef—The Eeshagasi's trophy—Our ride through the streets of the Capital of Afghan Turkestan.

In September, 1878, I presented to the commander of the troops in the Turkestan military district my leave-report, permitting me to relinquish my duties at Tashkent and to proceed to St. Petersburg or Odessa, by way of Afghanistan and Persia. In the event of his acquiescence, I begged Adjutant-General Von Kaufmann to furnish me with documents giving me a free

passage through the countries referred to. The General not only warmly acceded to my request, but also offered me pecuniary assistance for the journey. This offer, for various reasons, I declined ; but accepted twenty silver articles for presents on the way.

My leave-report was presented on the 18th of September. I trusted to accomplish the distance to Asterabad in fifty days, *i.e.*, before winter commenced in Afghanistan and Khorasan, and consequently had to hasten my departure. To the observation of General Kaufmann that I should have to wait some time for the permission of the Ameer, Shere Ali, I suggested that, instead of waiting for this permission at Tashkent, I should leave with the courier, who would convey the letter of the Governor-General to Cabul ; the courier would travel faster than I should, and, moreover, the arrangements for the journey would detain me a few days at Samarcand ; and thus, by the time I reached Mazar-e-Shereef, the administrative place of residence of the Governor-General of Afghan Turkestan, the courier would have reached Cabul and returned to that town with the pass. General Kaufmann agreed to this view of the

matter, and, furnished with an open letter signed and sealed by the Governor-General himself, I set out from Tashkent for Samarcand, by the post road, on November 6th, having despatched thither in good time beforehand my servants and luggage.

Having made my final arrangements for the journey, I rode from Samarcand on the 9th of November, late in the afternoon, bound for Herat and the Caspian.

I was accompanied by three followers. The first, acting as servant and interpreter, was Mustapha Rakhmetulin, a native of Gulistan, near Meshed. Eleven years previous he had been taken prisoner by the Merv Tekkes, sold as a slave in the city of Bokhara, and afterwards liberated in consequence of the suppression by the Russian Government of slavery in Khiva and Bokhara. He knew three languages—Persian, Toorkee, and Russian. The second was Ibrahim Moullah Hassan, a Persian, born at Samarcand. He spoke Persian and Toorkee, and was slightly acquainted with Russian. The third was a Kirghiz of the Sergiopol District, Urazali Kojanbergenoff by name. He spoke Russian, and, with the Persian, acted as groom.

Our armament consisted of a cavalry Berdan'

with 100 cartridges, and one of Smith and Vesson's revolvers with twelve cartridges. Later on, at Mazar-e-Shereef, we acquired two Afghan knives, and at Meshed a double-barrelled gun.

The means of transport at our disposal comprised four riding horses (one for each of us), two pack horses, and another as a reserve ; in all seven.

I did not have recourse to any disguise, but travelled in my uniform. I concealed neither my nationality nor my rank ; nor did I seek to hide the march route I intended to take on my way to the Caspian. I believe that in the circumstances in which I at the time found myself placed, this was the best means of travelling in Asia. Any masquerade that I might have adopted would have only impeded my movements, on account of my unsatisfactory knowledge of Oriental languages, and my ignorance of the ceremonial observances which Mussulmans make use of at almost every step.

I will omit from my narrative the excellent reception accorded to me by the Emir of Bokhara at Keetab, as well as my journey through that ruler's dominions, and will go on with the reception which I received on arriving in Afghanistan.

In the afternoon of October 17, I arrived at the Amu Daria, at the Turcoman settlement of Patta Keesar, where the river is crossed by boats. On the Afghan side, at the moment of my arrival at the ferry, no one could be seen. At the end of about two hours, however, on the left bank became visible a body of horsemen, who commenced to pitch two *kibitkas*, or tents. The Bokharan official immediately informed me that these *kibitkas* were intended for my reception, and the horsemen for my escort to Mazar-e-Shereef. This intelligence I easily believed; because, while yet at Sheerabad, I had sent on in advance, to give notice of my approach, an Afghan belonging to a party of three appointed by the Afghan Ambassador at the Court of the Emir of Bokhara to accompany me to the capital of Afghan Turkestan. I may here mention that the Afghan Envoy at the Court of the Emir of Bokhara was at Keetab when I passed through there. It was my desire, before proceeding to Afghanistan, to have an interview with him. Without the permission, however, of the Emir this was impossible. So much time was lost in my negotiations with Moozaffar Eddin that, having selected the 12th of October for my inspection of the Bokharan troops and for

. .

my departure directly afterwards for Shaar, I resolved not to carry out my idea of visiting the Afghan Envoy; especially as I had no particular object in doing so. The Afghan envoy, hearing during the morning of the 12th of my intended journey to his country, sent two officials to my quarters to enquire after my health. In the evening, it came to his ears that my projected interview with him would not take place, and in order to do me a service he sent me three of the men attached to his suite, with orders to escort me to Mazar-e-Shereef.

One of these men, as I have already said, I had sent on in front of me to herald my approach. A second one, on noticing the horsemen and the tents on the Afghan shore of the Oxus, I sent down to the waterside to some sandbanks stretching into the stream, with orders to shout to his countrymen and ask whether there was any obstacle to my crossing the river in the morning. The sun was then beginning to set, and I was desirous of knowing whether any impediment existed to my entry into Afghanistan. In reply to the Afghan's shouts, the party on the other side answered that I could cross the next day; adding, that the escort and the *kibitkas* were ready for me.

The following morning, October 18, I crossed over in a boat to the Afghan side with my men and horses. On touching the shore I was met by the Eeshagasi or Chamberlain, Shah Sevar Khan, with the officers of the cavalry escort that had arrived the evening before. This personage invited me to enter one of the *kibitkas*. Of these, as I have already said, there were two. I approached the nearest, in front of which was posted a guard; but had hardly got to the door of it when one of the men flashed his sword over my head. Not understanding what he meant by this, I demanded an explanation of the Eeshagasi, who replied that admittance into that tent was prohibited because it contained prisoners. I thereupon angrily asked him why he had not warned me of this in time. As an apology, the Eeshagasi struck the sentry, but I interposed with the remark that the man was not to blame for doing his duty, but only the Eeshagasi himself, who ought to have shown me the road.

Entering the other *kibitka* we sat down upon a carpet. After the customary congratulations on my safe arrival, and enquiries respecting my health, the Eeshagasi asked me who I was, where I

was going to, and what the object was of my journey. As a reply to these interrogations I handed him an open letter, in which was written in Russian, Persian, and Toorkee, the following announcement:—

“The bearer of this, Colonel Grodekoff, accompanied by his servants, is proceeding to Russia, with my permission, *via* Afghanistan and Persia. On that account I beg all functionaries who may be found along the route traversed by Colonel Grodekoff to accord him assistance and protection. September 21 (O.S.), 1878. Tashkent. The Governor-General of Turkestan, commanding the troops in the Turkestan Military District, Adjutant-General Von Kaufmann Ist.”

Having read this document, the Eeshagasi said that I should have to wait on the bank of the Oxus about two days, until I received the permission of the Lueenaib, or Governor-General of Afghan Turkestan, to proceed to Mazar-e-Shereef.*

I had already noticed, while walking with the Eeshagasi from the river shore to the tent, that

* The Governor-General of Afghan Turkestan at the time of my visit was Khosh Deel Khan. When the revolution took place at Mazar-e-Shereef after the death of Shere Ali, Khosh Deel Khan crossed the Oxus and sought refuge at Tashkent.

the locality was a damp, unwholesome place, covered with reeds and bushes, and without any signs of a human habitation (one can hardly term the huts built by the Afghan fishermen human habitations); and had made up my mind before handing Kaufmann's letter to the Chamberlain that under no circumstances would I wait even an hour on the spot; being determined, in the event of the Eeshagasi refusing, to proceed at once to Mazar-e-Shereef, to return to the Bokharan side of the Oxus and wait there for the arrival of the Governor's permission. All this I intimated to the Eeshagasi; adding that it was strange not to allow me, an individual almost unarmed, to proceed to Mazar-e-Shereef, when he himself had upwards of 30 soldiers to protect him; that it was strange not to let me go forward when Afghan subjects were allowed to move about freely in Turkestan; when our sovereigns were at peace with each other; and when their respective envoys were residing, one at Cabul and the other at Tashkent.

The Eeshagasi replied that in Russia there was one law, and in Afghanistan another. He could not think of taking upon himself the responsibility of letting me go forward. Finally,

excusing himself with the plea that he had pressing business to perform, he went out of the tent, and left me in it alone.

The pressing business to which he referred was the task of conveying across the river to Bokhara, Server and Eesaak Khan, the two cousins of Abdurrahman Khan who joined him in his flight to Badakshan in the winter of 1879. For a long period they had been kept in prison at Cabul, but were now about to be sent across the Oxus to live in exile at Samarcand.

It became clear to me now that the two tents had not been pitched for me, but for the relations of Abdurrahman Khan ; that the escort, instead of being sent to meet me, had arrived as the guard of the two prisoners ; and that, finally, the *kibitka* into which I had been refused admittance had contained Server and Eesaak Khan.

In a few minutes' time the ferry boat was loaded with men and animals, and pushed off from the Afghan shore. The Eeshagasi remained the whole time alongside the water's edge until the boat had reached the Bokharan bank. He then returned to the tent.

Immediately he entered the *kibitka*, I categorically demanded of him : " Did he mean to let me

go on at once to Mazar-e-Shereef or not?" The firmness of the question obviously disturbed Shah Sevar Khan. He commenced to bargain with me; instead of waiting two days he asked me to wait one; afterwards, to wait till the following morning. I remained immoveable. I put it to him that if I remained a night in such a marshy spot I should be sure to catch ague or fever; and that I had a long journey before me which I could not accomplish if I fell sick on the road. The Eeshagasi then promised to remain only until the evening, saying, that by the evening would assuredly arrive from the Governor-General an answer to the message he had sent off to Mazar-e-Shereef the moment after the two relations of Abdurrahman Khan had crossed the stream. But I knew very well that from the ferry of Patta Keesar to Mazar-e-Shereef was a distance of seventy versts (fifty-three miles), and that consequently the Governor-General's reply could not possibly arrive that evening. This I gave the Eeshagasi plainly to understand.

Seeing my obstinacy, the Chamberlain fell into despair. He would only keep me waiting a few hours, he said. He would give orders to kill a sheep and prepare dinner for me. In reply, I

refused to have any dinner except at the next station. Then, raising my voice, I exclaimed, "Is there to be an end to this or not? I am tired of all this nonsense! Immediately—this very moment—either I go on to Mazar-e-Shereef, or else I cross over again to Bokhara! But remember, mind, you shall answer to the Ameer for not letting me go on to the town."

I allowed myself to speak in this sharp manner to the Chamberlain, believing that any concession on my part would only be accepted as a sign of weakness; moreover, my high rank of "colonel,"* and, above all, the friendly relations existing between Russia and Shere Ali, gave me the full assurance that the Eeshagasi would not dare to endanger himself by the employment of any force against me.

Shah Sevar Khan dropped his head and began discussing in a loud tone of voice the matter with himself. "To let him go on—may be unlucky:

* In Russian "Polkovnik." Colonel, in English and in Afghan, is pronounced "Kernel." The Afghans have several military ranks bearing English names: for instance, Major (Mayor), and Adjutant (Adyutant). It was quite casually that I disclosed my rank to the Afghans. My interpreter introduced me to Shah Sevar Khan as "Polkovnik Grodekoff." This the Eeshagasi did not understand. I then said to him in Turkish: "Meer-Ali." Still he did not catch the meaning. At last, the idea came into my head to call myself in French "Col-o-nel!" Then the Eeshagasi understood me: "Ah, you are a Kernel!"

not to let him go on—may be unluckier still. Supposing he falls ill here, what shall I do with him? The whole of the blame will then fall upon me. Better let him proceed; it is all the same, here or there; he'll get no further than Mazar-e-Shereef."

Afterwards, getting up off the carpet and turning towards me, he said, "Good! Let us go. Only, you must understand they won't let you proceed beyond Mazar-e-Shereef without the permission of the Ameer."

"That is no concern of yours," I replied. "At Mazar-e-Shereef I shall have dealings with the Governor-General, and not with you."

Half an hour later, the whole of us were on the road leading to Mazar-e-Shereef.

From the ferry of Patta Keesar to Seeyageerd, where we halted for the night, the distance is thirty-eight miles. For two miles at the outset, the road runs through a marshy locality, inundated during the overflow of the Amu Daria, and covered with reeds and brushwood. At the end of the second mile commence the sands, which reach a considerable elevation at places and grow tamarisk and *saksaoul*.* These sands extend for a distance of twenty-four miles, to the ruins

* Haloxylon Ammodendron—C.M.

of the town of Seeyageerd ; and afterwards, the ground becomes open, level, and clayey, and continues so to Mazar-e-Shereef. The ruins of Seeyageerd extend for a distance of nine miles, as far as the present settlement of the same name, comprising fifty houses. From Patta Keesar to Seeyageerd there is no water. The road across the sands is extremely difficult. At Seeyageerd the water is brought from a rivulet flowing from the spur of the Paropamisus range.

Under the influence of our discussion on the banks of the Amu Daria, the Eeshagasi was in a most melancholy frame of mind. I was the first to speak. I praised his horse, I praised his gigantic height, I praised his arms, even his huge drinking-glass which he carried in a leather case slung across his shoulders. The Eeshagasi began to grow cheerful. We commenced to talk. Before long, I found that he was tolerably well acquainted with the progress of the Turkish campaign, and with the intelligence respecting the fighting published in the Ameer's official gazette at Cabul. Shah Sevar Khan remembered the names of all the Turkish Generals, but not a single one of the Russians, ascribing his forget-

fulness of the latter to the difficulty of pronouncing the names of our countrymen. He knew the name of our Emperor. He had read the history of Peter the Great, whom he called "Feodor." He took great interest in the strength of our army, and in that of the Turkestan detachment in particular. In order not to remain his debtor, I put to him a number of questions dealing with the history of Afghanistan during the last thirty years. In the end, we came to the last conflict between Shere Ali and the English. To my question: "Will the English Embassy be allowed to enter Cabul?" he replied, "Not for the world." "But if the English declare war against you?" I said. "We'll manage them," he replied, "just as we have managed them more than once before to-day."

We stopped three times on the road to drink and to smoke. The Afghans offered neither myself nor my servants any water or tobacco. At Seeyageerd, during the night halt, when my man wished to take up an Afghan pitcher, in order to pour some water into our teapot, several soldiers ran up to him and told him not to meddle with their pitchers; if he wanted water, he was to tell them, and they would pour it out of the

pitchers for him. It seemed that we were Kafirs—Infidels.

While we were making one of the halts on the road for the men to drink, I continued advancing alone. After a few seconds the Afghans commenced shouting to me to stop. Pretending not to hear them, I continued leisurely riding on. Presently, three soldiers dashed up to me. I replied to them that it was not my place to conform myself to their wishes, but their place to conform themselves to mine. Did they not know who I was? .

The soldiers fell back, and I resumed my solitary ride. When the men had finished drinking they had a race to catch up to me. I then took the Eeshagasi severely to task. Did he think that I meant to run away? How did he come to take that thought into his head? Had I not entered his country of my own free will? Where should I escape to, and how could I get away?

The Eeshagasi excused himself. The thought had never entered his head that I should escape. He had only been concerned about my safety.

“What nonsense you talk!” I replied. “Put an end to this farce. You can see around you for a whole farsang (four miles). There is not a single

man in view. How could there be any danger? Accept it as a rule from this moment, that I am not compelled to conform myself to you, but you to me."

This had such an effect upon the Eeshagasi that when the time arrived for the next stoppage on the road, he came up to me and asked my permission to allow his men to halt.

We pushed on quickly. On the steppe near the ruins of Seeyageerd the Eeshagasi several times put his horse to the gallop. He could not let a single bird pass him. The moment he saw one he unslung his double-barrelled gun from his shoulders, and had a shot at it. He had any amount of activity in him.

At Seeyageerd I was lodged in a house alongside the Eeshagasi's. Two sentries were placed in front of my lodgings, with orders not to let me go out of their sight and to follow me wherever I went.

After dusk I went outside into the courtyard to have a chat with the officers. One of the sentries exclaimed loudly as I passed, "If I had my way I would cut that Kafir into pieces!" These words were uttered in the hearing of two officers, but they took no notice of them,

although they could not but have known that even if I did not understand Persian (Pushta ?) my interpreter did, and that he would translate the speech for me.

In repeating the words of the sentry, Mustapha added that it would not be at all wonderful if the man tried to carry the wish into effect, since the murder of an infidel renders an Afghan a saint.

I chatted a short time with the officers in the courtyard, and then returned to my room to a supper of *pilaf* prepared by the Afghans. After I had finished eating I prepared for bed, barricading the door with boxes, locking it securely with the key, and placing my revolver close at hand in readiness for any emergency.

The night passed over quietly. The next morning Mustapha told me, that while cleaning my boots the night before, he had overheard the soldiers talking together. Said one, "Let us go and kill the Kafir. What matter's what happens afterwards—you know what awaits us in future life." Said another, "Yes, but you see the Russians will exact revenge. They will seize the whole of the country; then that will be bad for all." To this the first retorted,

“Can’t we say that he never crossed the river?”

“No,” replied the second Afghan; “because the Bokharans will say they delivered him whole in our hands. Besides, he is not a little man. He is a Colonel, and the Russians know well where he is and all about him. Let us give over thinking about taking his life.”

Whether this dialogue really did take place, or not, I cannot positively state. I do not think, however, that Mustapha deliberately lied. He had no object to gain in doing so. His interest was to screen such unpleasantnesses from me, because they might induce me to turn back; whereas his desire was to go forward and to visit Meshed, where he had relations and friends from whom he had been torn eleven years previous, when carried away a slave by the Merv Tekkes, and whom he had not seen since. Anyhow, I believed what he said, for I saw that among the soldiers of the convoy were several having the aspect of fanatics, and I therefore determined to keep my ear open while on the march.

From Seeyageerd to Mazar-e-Shereef the distance is fourteen miles. We rose late—about six o’clock or so. I went out into the courtyard to perform my toilette, and the Afghans gathered

round as spectators. When it came to cleaning my teeth, one of the Afghans, more inquisitive than the rest, said to Mustapha: "What is that brush made of?"

"Pig's bristles," replied Mustapha.

The Afghans fell back in horror, and commenced spitting violently, to express their disgust at using the hair of such an unclean animal for cleansing the mouth. I immediately beat a retreat to my room, inwardly making the resolve to perform my ablutions for the future in my tent or my chamber.

We rode away from Seeyageerd at 8 o'clock. At the end of an hour we saw before us, in the distance, Takhtapool, Mazar-e-Shereef, and Goo-reemar. Four blue minarets could be easily distinguished at Mazar-e-Shereef among the dingy grey structures of the place.

Our road led direct to the sanctuary; but, on approaching the town, we left the track and turned off across the fields until we reached the road leading from Takhtapool to Mazar-e-Shereef. It was obvious that the Afghans did not wish me to pass by the sanctuary.

When we reached Mazar-e-Shereef itself, the Eeshagasi gave orders for the soldiers to draw

their swords. We then entered the town in the following order:—In front rode three soldiers; then followed a bugler, playing on his instrument the whole time of the advance; afterwards came myself and the Eeshagasi side by side, and, finally, Mustapha and the escort.

“Why did you order the soldiers to draw their swords?” I demanded of the Eeshagasi, as we rode along the streets.

“For your security,” he replied; “our people are wild and unrestrained. One can’t tell what might happen.”

“Yes; but look here. You have taken measures to protect me from murder on the part of the populace, but let me ask you what steps you have taken to shield me from any attempts on my life on the part of your soldiers, who are obviously drawn from a people as wild and as unrestrained as these, and who might also send me to another world. I must give you to understand that I fear your soldiers—I have reasons for doing so—far more than I do the populace. The people of Afghan Turkestan are Uzbeks* by race: I know them well, and feel just as safe among them as in my own home. Am I not

* Vambery calls them “the best race in Central Asia.”—C. M.

right, I would ask you, in ascribing as the true reason, your desire to expose me to the town as your trophy? Don't you wish the people to believe that I am your prisoner?"

"Think what you like," replied the Eeshagasi; "but I must give you up whole and uninjured. I have to answer for every hair that falls from your head."

We rode for some time through the winding streets of Mazar-e-Shereef. The soldiers riding in front did not allow any one to stand in our way, or pass along the road, driving all they met into the side streets. In passing by the gate of the Bazaar, I suggested to the Eeshagasi that he should take me through the place and show me to the mob as his trophy; but he made no reply. Throughout nearly the whole of the march to Mazar-e-Shereef on the 19th of October the Eeshagasi had been taciturn and quiet. The nearer we approached the town, the more silent he became. Probably he was casting in his mind what explanation he should offer to the Lueenaib, or Governor-General, for conducting me to Mazar-e-Shereef.

CHAPTER II.

A SKETCH OF AFGHAN TURKESTAN.

My Residence at Mazar-e-Shereef—The Eeshagasi leaves with a lie in his mouth—General Stolietoff's room—Mahomet Musin Khan—A drunken Envoy—An Afghan dinner—Mustapha's complaints against the Afghans—I am conducted to the Palace of the Governor-General of Afghan Turkestan—Appearance of the Afghan soldiers—Khosh Deel Khan—Afghan Turkestan described—Andkhoi—The subjugation of Maimene—Sack of the city and slaughter of 18,000 people—Aktcha, Goorzovan, Darzab, and Badakshan—Ill-treatment of the Uzbeks.—Awaiting their deliverance by Russia or Abdurrahman Khan—How the natives are tortured—Seizure of suspected Russian spies—Military strength of the Afghans beyond the Hindoo Koosh.

AT last we reached the house assigned for my residence. It was the house in which the members of our Embassy had lived in July, 1878, while waiting for permission from Shere Ali to proceed to Cabul.

In order to reach my lodgings we had to pass through three courtyards. The first of these was broad and spacious, and was devoted to the manufacture of sun-baked bricks. The second was not so large. Here we dismounted, and left behind us the ten troopers forming our escort.

The third was smaller still, and contained a dozen Afghans, some of them engaged in boiling water in kettles.

A wicket at the end of this courtyard gave admittance to another very spacious enclosure, with a two-story clay structure on either side. In one of these buildings were the lodgings selected for me. These consisted of two rooms; one about ten paces long and six wide, and the other about six paces square. The floor of the former was covered with carpet, on top of which was fastened white calico. The smaller chamber had only cheap rugs placed on the floor. As regards the walls, the larger room was ornamented with flowers and fruits gaudily painted; and the smaller one with a number of alabaster figures, covered with a white substance like silver, and interspersed with labels from Landrin's sugar candy boxes and the wrappers of the sweetmeats of the St. Petersburg Sugar Refining Company.

We, that is to say myself, the Eeshagasi, two officers, and one Dafadar (an under-officer in charge of ten men), entered the lodgings, and then the Eeshagasi announced that the two rooms, with the courtyard outside, were wholly at my disposal.

We sat down on the floor, and tea was served by my attendants. I offered some to the Eeshagasi and the officers, but they all refused it. When I had finished one cup my companions rose from the floor and commenced to bid me adieu; expressing their warmest wishes respecting my welfare. I thanked them for their attention to me while on the road, and begged the Eeshagasi to inform the Governor-General that I was quite ready to present myself before him, even that very day; adding that I wished exceedingly to see him that day if possible. In reply, the Eeshagasi observed that I was a most restless man. However, he would give my message to the Lueenaib, Khosh Deel Khan, although he doubted whether he would consent to receive me before to-morrow. Afterwards the Eeshagasi promised to pay me a visit the next morning. All the way along the road the Eeshagasi had been telling lies, and he took his departure with a lie on his lips. I never saw him any more.

On being left alone I took a walk into the courtyard to examine my residence. The court was about 150 paces long and 75 broad. Along the whole of its length flowed a broad canal, along-

side which grew six magnificent Oriental plane trees. On the opposite side of the canal was an artificial elevation of clay, covered with alabaster. Above this rose several peach and apricot trees. The court was sprinkled with sand, and kept in excellent order. The whole of the buildings, in one of which was constructed a bath, were empty. Side by side with my lodgings was a large room, in which General Stolietoff had resided during the summer of 1878.

Having examined the courtyard and the buildings, I thought I would inspect the little enclosure in which we had left our horses; but was stopped at the wicket by an Afghan officer, who courteously informed me that I could not pass through the gateway. I looked, and saw the doorways of the other courtyards guarded by infantry men with rifles. I understood the officer now. I was under the charge of sentinels.

On returning to my own courtyard I was followed by the Secretary of the Lueenaib, Mahomet Musin Khan. Behind him came men bearing two leather-covered arm-chairs.

Announcing himself to me as an official placed at my disposition by the Lueenaib, Mahomet

Musin Khan gave orders aloud to all about him to pay heed to my desires, and stated that he should daily visit me to see that my commands were properly attended to. He then said that the Lueenaib, knowing that the Russians were not accustomed to the Oriental custom of sitting, had sent me two arm-chairs for my use. Afterwards he presented to me the individuals appointed to look after my comfort—seven in all, and comprising Ali Reeza, a Nazir or Bursar, an old man, and the chief of the attendants; Yar Mahomet, a sort of footman, whose duty it was to serve the tea and look after the water-pipe, or *Kaliana*; a cook and his assistant; a scullion; a watchman; and an attendant to take charge of the bath. These men had all of them been forced into service, and were bound to work for the Government until death, or old age, or feeble health, released them. All of them had commenced service in the army; after a while they had been employed out of the ranks, and then they had served afresh under the flag. Such changes from active military life to civil employment, and from civil employment to service afresh under the flag, mark the whole of such men's lives. Now and again they are allowed a short term of furlough to visit their

homes, but the rest of their time they are slaves to the State.

My first acquaintance with Mahomet Musin Khan, and the presentation of the domestics, took place in the courtyard. I afterwards invited him to enter my rooms, and we sat down side by side in the chairs. "From this moment," observed Mahomet, when he had made himself comfortable, "you are the guest of the Ameer, Shere Ali."

The questions that he then put to me were very similar to those of the Eeshagasi on the banks of the Oxus: Who was I? Where was I going? What was I travelling for? and so on. Asking me to show him my passport, he examined it carefully and put it into his pocket, saying that he would show it to the Lueenaib. I asked him when I should be granted an interview with that functionary. To this he replied that he did not know, but that he was going directly to ascertain his wishes. He then summoned Yar Mahomet and ordered him to bring some tea. This was given him in a different teapot and teacup to those presented to me. After this occasion Mahomet Musin Khan never failed to order tea to be brought him when he paid me a visit; but

his tea service was always kept distinct from mine. The vessels used by him were clean. I myself occasionally drank out of a set profaned by our Embassy, and rejected as unclean by the Afghans. The latter never used my tea service; and, following their example, my servants Urazali the Kirghiz, and Ibrahim the Persian, also refused to make use of my utensils. Mustapha alone remained unaffected by the circumstances in which he found himself placed. The epithet "Kafir," bestowed on him by the Afghans, had no effect upon his equanimity whatever.

This arose, perhaps, partly from the circumstance that Mustapha had lived so long with Russian officials that he had grown callous to the dictates of his own religion. He ate pork freely, and liked his glass of wine or spirits. Of course, he lowered himself thereby in the eyes of the Afghans, who regarded with horror such reckless profanity on the part of Mustapha Rakhmetulin. The Afghans displayed the utmost inquisitiveness in regard to the consumption of pork and fermented liquors by myself and my suite. They were always asking me whether I and my attendants fed on pork, and used wine or spirits for drink. To such questions I always returned a straight-

forward answer. I told them frankly that I was very fond of a succulent slice of roast pork, and that I was not averse to a bottle of wine if the liquor was good and suited my palate. So far as the Afghan officers were concerned, especially those of Persian origin, they were always enquiring whether I had not got some *vodky* with me. They were always concerned when they heard that I had none in my possession—they had such dreadful pains! In the larger towns of Afghanistan numerous illicit stills exist for the production of spirits, and the upper classes are greatly addicted to drink. Not unfrequently, they even make themselves drunk. Thus the Dabeer-Ul-Mulk, the Afghan Ambassador sent by Shere Ali to Tashkent, was a habitual drunkard; drinking at night-time by himself when the members of his suite were asleep. My man Mustapha acted some time as interpreter to the Afghan Embassy. At the order of the Dabeer-Ul-Mulk he used secretly to fetch him *vodky* from the Russian gin-shops. As soon as the Afghan suite had retired to rest the Ambassador would begin his devotions to Bacchus, and mostly managed to polish off a couple of bottles of *vodky* before the morning.

Having drunk the tea and eaten the tea-leaves, Mahomet Musin Khan went away. Ali Reeza and Yar Mahomet immediately afterwards brought in the dinner; consisting of *pilaf* with aniseed* and mutton, mutton soup and sauce, and mutton with cabbage. The whole of the repast was excellent. In quantity it was just sufficient for one man, and in this respect quite different to what I had experienced in Bokhara, where for myself alone had been served up half a *pood* (18 lbs.) of cakes, two or three huge dishes—each a yard in diameter—of *pilaf*, and two or three more heaped up with mutton and chicken, coloured or uncoloured with saffron. After dinner the attendants brought me sweet melons and water melons; and finally tea, which latter had been handed to me before dinner, but which I had relegated to the end of the meal.

My men received only *pilaf*, with a small quantity of mutton. During their ten days' journey through Bokhara they had grown accustomed to the boundless hospitality of the Bokharans. Delicacies of various kinds had been dispensed to them in such prodigious quantities

* Aniseed is largely made use of along the left bank of the Oxus, in Afghanistan and in Persia. On the right bank, however, in Turkestan, it is almost entirely unknown.

that they had been unable to eat the whole of the food, and had turned an honest penny by selling the surplus. Not unnaturally, therefore, they were extremely displeased with the niggardly fare of the Afghans.

After dinner they came in a body, to complain that their mutton was scanty, and their *pilaf* cold. One after the other they found fault with the rascally Afghans for giving straw to their horses instead of clover, and for forbidding them to go into the town to worship God.

In reply I said, that so far as the food was concerned, I would speak to Mahomet Musin Khan; that, in respect to the fodder, it was no use to complain, since it was the custom of the country to feed horses on straw*; and that regarding the permission to go to the mosque, I promised* I would endeavour to obtain the sanction of the Lueenaib as soon as my interview came off.

Shortly afterwards Mahomet Musin Khan came to tell me that the Lueenaib had consented to

* Along the left bank of the Amu Daria clover rarely grows, and the horses are fed on straw, mingled occasionally with a little coarse grass, something like clover. Along the Afghan bank clover grass is not bound into sheaves, as in Turkestan, Khiva, and Bokhara, but is twisted into bands, which require to be chopped up before the fodder can be given to the horses.

receive me the next day, October 20th, at eight o'clock in the morning. I informed him of the complaint raised by my attendants in regard to their food, and he summoned Ali Reeza, whom he roundly scolded, threatening, in the event of another complaint being made, to cut off his ears.

The next day, at half-past seven, appeared Mahomet Musin Khan, to conduct me to the Governor-General.

I put on my uniform, and we set off for the palace of the Lueenaib in the following order :—In front marched, ten paces in advance, two foot soldiers; then came myself; afterwards, Mahomet Musin Khan; and, finally, ten infantrymen. Really speaking, these men were not regular soldiers, but only militia, designated Khazadars. They are levied, when needed, for local service and as auxiliaries in the field. In consequence of the war with the English, six battalions of regular infantry had been sent from Afghan Turkestan to Cabul, and their place filled by 1,000 Khazadars.

I was told that these Khazadars receive yearly a red cap, a *kaftan*, and a pair of trousers; and every month six rupees as pay. With this money they are compelled to keep them-

selves. The guard placed over my lodgings consisted of ten Khazadars and a non-commissioned officer. To escort me to the palace a special guard of Khazadars was appointed.

The road along which we passed had been sprinkled with water, and on the way we met police officials, stationed to prevent any one passing during the progress of our little procession.

I found that my lodgings were situated about 600 paces from the Governor-General's residence. At the entrance to the palace-grounds was stationed a sentinel in red uniform, who presented arms to me as I passed. The militia escort received orders here to leave me, and I entered the grounds, followed only by Mahomet Musin Khan and Mustapha.

At all the cross-roads of the extensive palace-grounds were stationed sentries. I counted fourteen of them during our advance to the palace, and there were, no doubt, many others in the part of the grounds which we did not traverse. On approaching the sentries, Mahomet Musin Khan made gestures to them that they should salute me.

Perpendicular with the palace, opposite an open gallery where the reception was arranged to take

place, was drawn up a company of infantry, or "Paraders." The "Paraders" form the palace guard of the Governor-General; but they are also often employed for service in the field. Their uniform was composed of a red cloth tunic with collar, cuffs, and facings of yellow; white cotton knee-breeches; shoes, but no stockings; and a felt cap with a metal star in front of it. Their arms consisted of a muzzle-loading rifle and bayonet. Their sword belts were of white leather, such as are used by the Russian Guards, and passed round the waist and over the right shoulder. All the men were well developed, and had a good appearance. They had shaved their beards, and wore whiskers like a narrow streak of hair, from the ears to the extremity of the lips. Their faces reminded me greatly of the old soldiers of the Russian Guards when their whiskers and side tufts used to be dyed. The officers wore dark blue single-breasted tunics, black breeches, and a felt cap with a blue muslin cloth attached behind. I passed along the front of the guard, but the men did not salute me.

On reaching the palace I ascended several steps, and emerged on a broad gallery, along the wall of which were disposed a number of leather arm-chairs,

similar to the specimens conveyed to my lodgings the night before. The floor of the gallery was covered with carpets.

Khosh Deel Khan was sitting in one of the arm-chairs. On my entering the gallery he rose, and advanced several paces to meet me. We shook hands, and the Lueenaib invited me to sit down side by side with him. The only other persons in the gallery during the interview were Mahomet Musin Khan, and the Meerza Neezam, Safar Etdin. Both these individuals sat some distance off.

The Meerza Neezam is a functionary corresponding to our chief of the staff. Safar Etdin was an Uzbek by birth. This was a somewhat remarkable circumstance, because, during the whole of my stay in Afghan Turkestan, I met only two Uzbeks in the military service of the Ameer; the Meerza Neezam, and a cavalry officer. The Afghans consider the Uzbeks unfit for war, and therefore do not press them into their military service.

Afghanistan is divided into four Governor-Generalships: Cabul, Candahar, Herat, and Turkestan; or rather I should say, used to be, since the conquest of the country by the English has partially extinguished these features of the time of Shere Ali. Of the four provinces, one of the most

extensive and least known—Afghan Turkestan—was ruled over in 1878 by the Lueenaib Khosh Deel Khan. It consisted of all the Uzbek States lying between the Oxus, the mountains, and Badakshan. Khosh Deel Khan was exceedingly young for such a responsible appointment. He was scarcely yet thirty years old. In appearance he was remarkably handsome, tall, well-built, possessed fine features, and had a short, dark beard. He wore a double-breasted tunic, with bone buttons ; blue breeches, patent leather boots, a felt cap, and white cotton gloves. Around his neck was tied a yellow silk handkerchief.

The Lueenaib had married a sister of the Ameer Shere Ali, which partly explained why his youthfulness had been overlooked in his appointment to the command of Afghan Turkestan. Of the political importance of his province an estimate may be formed from the circumstance that it is the nearest part of Afghanistan to our possessions; one portion of it, indeed, Badakshan, being in the immediate vicinity of our province of Ferghana. Moreover, it runs side by side with the territory of the Independent Turcomans, and, finally, into its composition enter no less than ten Uzbek States. Over this territory the

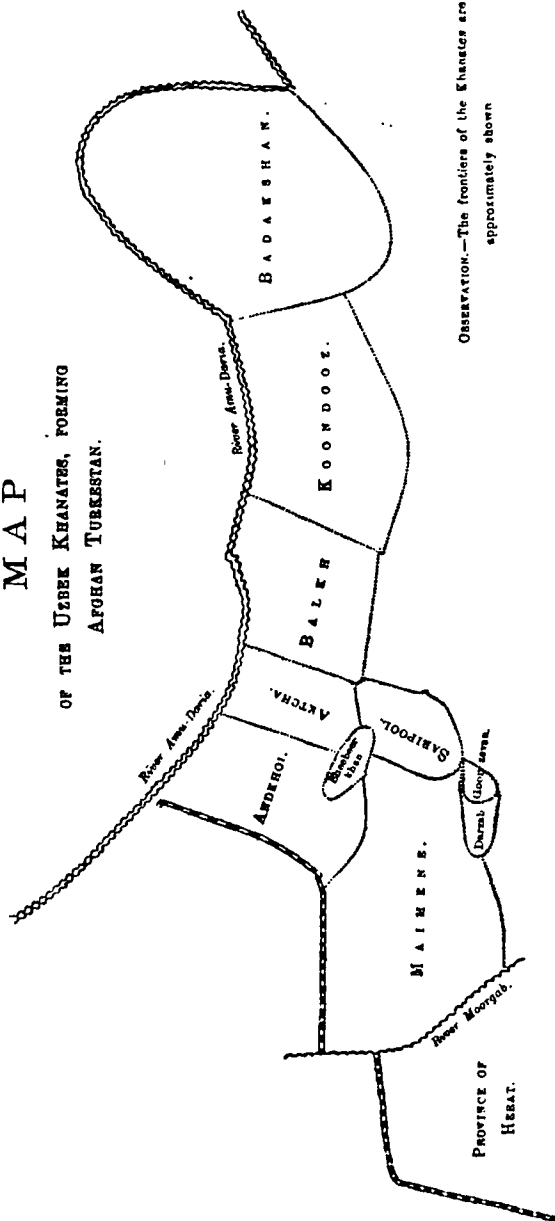
Lueenaib exercises supreme military and civil control; and it may be well, therefore, if, before describing my interview with him, I say one or two more words in regard to the region under his jurisdiction.

Into the composition of Afghan Turkestan enter the Khanates of Maimene, Saripool, Shee-beerkhan, Aktcha, Andkhoi, Balkh, Goorzevan, Darzab, Koondooz, and Badakshan. At the present moment, only one of these is semi-independent—Andkhoi. The rest are all of them in a subjugated condition.

The Khan of Andkhoi has managed to preserve his power through the assistance and co-operation which he afforded Shere Ali's army four years ago, during the conquest of Maimene. In 1878 Meer Dowlet Khan was in receipt of an annual pension of 12,000 rupees from Shere Ali. At Andkhoi is always stationed a regiment of Afghan cavalry, to protect the Khanate from the incursion of the Turcomans. Every year the Khan is bound to present himself before the Lueenaib with offerings, which latter are forwarded to Cabul. As regards the internal administration of Andkhoi, the Khan acts without restraint, and has the power to dispense life or

MAP

OF THE UZBEK KHANATES, FORMING
AFGHAN TURKESTAN.



OBSERVATION.—The frontiers of the Khanates are approximately shown

death to his subjects. In effecting this arrangement with Meer Dowlet Khan, the late Ameer Shere Ali obviously followed the practice of the English in India. Having no legal pretext for annexing the Uzbek State, he made the Khan his pensioner, and afterwards quartered upon the capital a detachment of troops, nominally as a safeguard against nomad attacks, but, in reality, nothing more than a sword of Damocles, ready to fall upon and crush the petty despot should his existence become disagreeable to the Ameer.

The Khanate of Maimene was subjugated about four years ago. Next to Badakshan this Khanate was the largest of the Uzbek States ; containing a population exceeding 100,000 people. The last Khan of Maimene was Meer Hussein. Shere Ali declared war against him on account of the constant attacks by Maimene men upon Afghan subjects in Turkestan, and the frequency with which they were carried away into slavery. The Afghan army consisted of 10,000 soldiers and 20 guns. To expedite their march, the road beyond Sari-pool was levelled and greatly improved. The army marched in two columns ; one from Mazar-e-Shereef, and the other from Herat.

For six months the city of Maimene resisted

the attacks of the besiegers. A breach having then been effected in the wall by the Afghan artillery, the troops took the place by storm and slaughtered 18,000 of the defenders. The city was afterwards sacked, and the houses rased to the ground.

Meer Hussein, who had bravely defended himself in the citadel, was taken prisoner and carried off to Cabul a captive. As the Khan had been assisted by the States of Saripool and Sheebeer Khan, both the latter were conquered by the Ameer's troops and annexed to Afghanistan. Their subjugation was effected earlier than that of Maimene, since they lay in the route to the latter place. The last Khan of Saripool was Mahomet, who was carried off prisoner to Cabul. The last ruler of Sheebeer Khan was Khakhim Khan, who afterwards died in captivity at the Ameer's capital.

The Khanate of Aktcha was annexed to Afghanistan thirty years ago. Its last sovereign was Eeshan Aurach, who died a prisoner at Cabul. The Khanate of Balkh, in which is incorporated Mazar-e-Shereef, was also annexed thirty years ago. The last Khan, Rustem, was killed at Cabul by his nephew. The Khanate

of Goorzevan, consisting only of a *kishlak*, or winter settlement, of 400 houses, was subjugated ten years ago. The Khanate of Darzab, comprising three *kishlaks*—Darzab, Beltcheerag, and Kaulian—was conquered at the same time. The acquisition of Badakshan followed four years later. The last ruler, Jandar Shah, lived in exile at Utch Koorgan, in Ferghana, supported by a pension of 1,500 roubles from the Russian Government. In August, 1878, he was murdered by two of his sons for his cruelty towards them. From this slight sketch it will be seen that the Afghans have only recently conquered their province of Turkestan, and that, in reality, the subjugation of the country has been accomplished before our very eyes. Although the advent of the Afghans has been the means of introducing order where there formerly existed nothing but war, rapine, and murder, systematically carried on by the Khans, the Uzbeks, nevertheless, feel the heavy hand of the conqueror. Regarding the Uzbeks as effeminate and unfitted for war, the invaders impose, as a substitute for compulsory military service, burdens of the most onerous description. Even if they now and again choose a few Uzbeks for the army,

they never put them into the ranks, but employ them as officers' servants, camel drivers, and so forth.

Worse than this, the people are prevented from rising from their degraded condition. All avenues to social distinction, or official rank, are closed against them. The only Uzbek who has succeeded in coming to the front, and possesses influence of any kind, is Safar Etdin, the Meerza Neezam.

The attitude of the Afghans towards the Uzbeks is exceedingly haughty. The ordinary Afghan soldier considers himself as belonging to a race superior to the Uzbek, and treats him as an inferior being. It is quite a common thing for the Afghans to resort to their whips, or to the but-end of their rifles, in their dealings with the subjugated people. I often saw Afghan soldiers, wandering without employment from village to village, fall upon the unfortunate defenceless Uzbeks, and, without any obvious pretext whatever, thrash them unmercifully. And how they used to bully them, when they made the inhabitants bring food and fodder for ourselves and the escort! True, the Afghans always gave them receipts for what we had,

and the debt thus acknowledged was afterwards deducted from the taxes when the tax-gatherer called ; but, all the same, the Uzbeks must have felt keenly the unamiable manners of the conquerors.

In order to prevent a rising on the part of the Uzbeks, the Afghans long ago made them deliver up all their arms. Only those Uzbeks are allowed to retain weapons whose villages lie open to Turcoman attacks. The people, recognising their weakness, preserve a quiet demeanour, and wait patiently for the hour that will see them delivered from their state of oppression. Their deliverer, they believe, will either be Abdurrahman Khan or Russia.

The name of Abdurrahman Khan is always uttered with loyalty and respect in Afghan Turkestan ; but never louder than in a whisper. The slightest reference to the exiled prince is sufficient to lead to a man's arrest, and his rigorous cross-examination by the Afghan authorities ; and the culprit is only too thankful if he gets off with his nose and ears intact. Sometimes the punishment is heavier still than the deprivation of those members. While I was at Mazar-e-Shereef, I saw two Uzbeks hanged, by the order

of the Governor-General,* for expressing their sympathy with the pretender to the Afghan throne. On another and more personal occasion, having mentioned the name of the Prince in the course of a conversation with my interpreter, several Afghans immediately rushed forward and demanded : " What did you say about Abdurrahman Khan ? "

Having been impressed by the might of Russia in conquering Khiva and Bokhara, the Uzbeks living on the left bank of the Amu Daria imagined that the advance of the Russians upon Samarcand would not terminate there ; and to this day they believe that, sooner or later, we shall cross the river and impose our administration upon Afghan Turkestan. Hearing from a thousand mouths, from the Russian Mussulmans resorting to the shrine of Ali †, at Mazar-e-Shereef, of the blessings of Russian order and Russian right, and

* The Lueenaib had the power of inflicting capital punishment.

† The Uzbeks relate that when Ali died, his body was placed on the back of a white she-camel, which was then loosed and allowed to wander whithersoever it chose. It was decided by the Mussulmans to bury the Saint under the spot where the camel stopped. For a long time the animal wandered about, and, at length, arriving at Mazar-e-Shereef, fell down, exhausted. The she-camel was then pushed aside and the body of Ali buried under the exact spot where it had fallen down. The Persians laugh at this legend and deny its genuineness. According to them, Ali was buried at Kerbele.

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of our humane relations with the conquered natives of Russian Turkestan, the Uzbeks do not manifest any fear towards us, but desire our presence. This I saw clearly enough in the warm reception accorded to me by the Uzbeks wherever I went ; not to speak of what I heard from the lips of those who artfully managed to pass through the Afghan guard and approach my side. Said they to me, “Are the Russians coming soon? Would to God that the time could be hastened for our deliverance from these Afghans! Tell us—is it not true that the Russians are coming now to Afghanistan? Is it not true that troops are following behind you?”

The Afghans know quite well the feeling of the people, and this is why they are so jealous of persons entering the country from Russian Turkestan. It is easy to understand why my advent was unpleasant for the Afghans ; why, under the pretext that I might be killed, they kept me under a guard ; why they cut off all communication between myself and the people ; why, during my journey through the country, they endeavoured to avoid all inhabited places ; why the Governor of Maimene demanded that I should ride through the town after dark ; why the Uzbeks them-

selves believed that I should not be allowed to traverse Afghan Turkestan, but should be carried off to Cabul; why, finally, they endeavoured to decoy my man Mustapha from my service, knowing full well that, deprived of an interpreter, I should be unable to continue my travels. Yar Mahomet told me that while our Embassy was at Cabul, Khosh Deel Khan, suspecting two Uzbeks of being Russian spies, had them seized and subjected to torture. First they were flogged, and afterwards subjected to compression of the head.

This latter method of extorting confessions is effected in the following manner:—The Afghans take a strap, inside which are sewn two strong canes. This they fix on the head in such a manner that the canes rest against the temples. As soon as they commence to tighten it, the canes crush in the temples, and cause exquisite anguish. Another mode of torture practised by the Afghans is, to drive splinters into the feet. I was gravely assured by the Uzbeks that it was impossible to do without torture of some kind or other. They averred that it had a most salutary effect on rascals and thieves.

Whether the Lueenaib managed to extort any confession from the two spy prisoners or not, I am unable to say. They were still in prison when I left Mazar-e-Shereef.

The Uzbeks consider themselves a more pious people than the Afghans. As an evidence of the blessings which God has bestowed on His chosen ones, they point to the innumerable tombs of the Saints that are to be met with everywhere in Turkestan; and then they demand of the Afghans—"How many of your tribe have pleased the Almighty and received the title of Saint? Being Sunnites, and having no saints of your own, you have to go to the Sheeite town of Meshed to pray." The Afghans reply only with abuse.*

Constantly fearing the advent of Abdurrahman Khan, with the inevitable accompaniment of a rising among the Uzbeks, the Afghans have always maintained one-third their military force in Turkestan. Notwithstanding the danger which menaced Afghanistan on the side of India at the end of 1878, the Ameer Shere Ali withdrew for the defence of his eastern frontier only

* An interesting quarrel on this point, I myself heard during the whole of the stage between Kala Naoo and Kooshka.

six battalions of troops, replacing them at once with 1,000 Khazadars. After their departure, the remaining Afghan force in Turkestan (excluding Koondooz and Badakshan) consisted of twelve battalions of infantry, twelve regiments of cavalry, and from thirty to forty field and mountain guns.

If the recent rumour be true that the Afghan troops have been withdrawn from Turkestan, for the defence of the territory menaced by the English, then that is equivalent to a loss of the region north of the Hindoo Koosh; since the Bamian route, joining Cabul with Mazar-e-Shereef, is blocked with snow for five months out of the twelve, and the road from the fortress of Herat, along the northern declivity of the Paropamisus range, is extremely difficult; and, indeed, almost impracticable for the advance of a large body of troops.*

* Recent telegrams from India confirm the accuracy of Colonel Grodekoff's statements in regard to the feeling of the Uzbeks of Afghan Turkestan towards Abdurrahman Khan. Balkh, Badakshan, and Koondooz have already declared in his favour, and the power of the Afghans north of the Hindoo Koosh appears to have entirely melted away.—C. M.

CHAPTER III.

MY IMPRISONMENT AT MAZAR-E-SHEREEF.

The interview with the Lueenaib—Bokharan civility and Afghan churlishness—Khosh Deel Khan refuses to allow me to proceed—Colonel Matvaeff and his visit to Badakshan—Am not allowed even to return to Bokhara, to await there the arrival of the answer from Shere Ali—My quarrel with the Lueenaib—Harmony restored, though not confidence—The Afghan guard under inspection—General Razgonoff—The Governor-General borrows my uniform—Refusal to convey my letter to General Kaufmann—I explode with anger—The guard increased over my lodgings—A council of war—We obtain and secrete weapons—Our plan of escape.

LET me now describe what took place during my interview with the Lueenaib, at Mazar-e-Shereef, on the 20th of October, 1878.

According to the custom prevailing in Central Asia, I enquired after the health of the Ameer Shere Ali ; but, to my surprise, received no reciprocal enquiry respecting the health of the Sovereign Emperor and the Governor-General of Turkestan. In Bokhara, no matter how remote from the capital the locality may be, or how insignificant may be the rank of the officials you encounter on the road, you always have questions

put to you respecting the health of his Imperial Majesty and General Kaufmann ; and your interrogator invariably adds the words "*eke daoolet—beer daoolet*"—*i.e.*, "the two States (Russia and Bokhara) form one State."

Although I knew that without the permission of the Ameer I should not be allowed to proceed to Herat, I nevertheless decided to try whether I could obtain the sanction of Khosh Deel Khan, of whom General Stolietoff had spoken in the most flattering terms. I therefore expressed to the Lueehaib my desire to push on as quickly as possible, since I had far to ride, and the rapid approach of winter might block the mountain passes,* and prevent the accomplishment of my journey.

Khosh Deel Khan, in reply, said that I could not go on to Herat without the permission of the Ameer.

"When may I expect the arrival of his sanction?" I asked.

"In the summer," he replied, "your messenger might go and return in six days. But now winter weather has commenced in the moun-

* Already, in passing through Samarcand, I had been informed that snow had been seen in the defiles of the Paropamisus as early as the end of August.

tains, large falls of snow have taken place between here and Cabul, and, consequently, your letter has, no doubt, been delayed."

"How long, do you think, I may have to wait for an answer in the present condition of the roads?"

"Eight, ten, twelve—perhaps, fourteen days."

"And shall I have to wait all that while at Mazar-e-Shereef?"

"Certainly."

"Of course you will allow me to go freely about the town, and visit the vicinity, while waiting for a reply?"

"No, I cannot allow you to do that. I cannot permit you to leave your quarters."

"Why?"

"Because I fear your safety may suffer. You do not know the people here. They are a wild lot, without any restraint of their own, and I must therefore take care that they do not murder you. I cannot explain to you how much you have disquieted me by your arrival. I cannot sleep at night, because you are here the guest of the Ameer, and anything unpleasant might happen to you. It is only just now that I have received intelligence of another Russian officer,

proceeding in the direction of Badakshan.* I really don't know what to do."

"If I occasion you so much disquietude," I replied, "the best thing I can do is to betake myself to the Bokharan side of the Amu Daria, and await there the permission of Shere Ali. Should the sanction of the Ameer involve fresh anxiety on your part, I will beforehand reject your assistance, and beg of you not to regard me as a guest of the Ameer. Treat me, in fact, like an ordinary individual, like you would any other Russian subject that might cross the Oxus into your country on private affairs. I shall be able to find my way about all right. If I had decided to go on straight to Herat, I could have done so very well without your assistance."

"At present I cannot let you return to the Bokharan side. What may happen later on, I myself do not know. It depends entirely upon the Ameer."

"Why cannot you let me return to the Bokharan side?" I demanded.

"Because no one asked you to come here," replied the Lueenaib.

I admit that this refusal, and the originality of

* Colonel Matvaeff.

the motive for the refusal supplied by Khosh Deel Khan, fairly staggered me. For several minutes I did not know what to say. I felt I was a prisoner, and my thoughts kept running on the best mode of effecting my escape.

“It seems, then, that I am your prisoner,” I exclaimed, at length. “It seems that I was not in error when I told your Eeshagasi that he wished to show the people what a trophy had dropped into his hands. You say I am your guest, and yet treat me as a captive—a treatment which is nowhere accorded to guests. It is, certainly, a strange style with you, to entertain your guests by force. Your people in our country go where they like, and do what they wish. Our sovereigns are at peace with each other; our Envoy is at Cabul and yours is at Tashkent—yet you keep me under arrest. True, no one asked me to come here; but I do not demand of you an impossibility—to let me go on; I only ask permission to return to Bokhara.”

“You have your law: we, ours,” calmly replied the Governor-General.

“I shall write, then, to General Kaufmann. The letter, I presume, will be forwarded to its destination.”

"The letter will be forwarded."

I then rose from my arm-chair to take my leave. The Lueenaib begged me to sit down again. "Do you find my company dull?" he said.

I took these words as a piece of mockery, and remarked, angrily, that it was disgraceful for him to mock me, in the position in which I found myself placed.

The Lueenaib turned red with confusion. He commenced to justify himself; saying that I had not understood his words properly, and that he meant that it would be pleasanter for me to be with him and his people than to sit alone in my lodgings. To this he added that he would send off that very day an express to Cabul, and if I cared to write a letter to the Russian Envoy there, the man should take it with him.

Harmony being restored, he began to question me respecting my medals and decorations, asking me in what campaigns I had served, and what honours I had received in each of them. Afterwards he began to discuss the qualities of our respective armies. The Lueenaib expressed his opinion that it was impossible to institute a comparison between the Afghan army and that

of Russia; since the former had only been in existence three years, while the latter was more than 200 years old. The Afghans were doing their best to Europeanize their forces, and, under the guidance of Shere Ali, the English military formation had been introduced.

At my request, the Lueenaib gave orders for the guard to go through their manual exercise in front of the palace. Some parts of the exercise were similar to those in vogue in the Russian army twenty-five years ago; but the men performed them very well, and the bayonet exercise was done excellently. The word of command was given in the vernacular. Until Shere Ali reorganized the army it was given in English.

The Afghan infantry have three kinds of pace—slow, ordinary, and quick. The company performed each before my eyes.

“What more do they know?” I then asked of the Lueenaib.

“They know how to break front,” he replied; “but there is no room for it here. That is all they know.”

After this little review I took my leave of Khosh Deel Khan, and was conducted back

to my lodgings in the same manner that I came.

On reaching my rooms I wrote a letter to General Razgonoff,* at Cabul, begging him to obtain for me as quickly as possible the permission of Shere Ali for my ride to Herat. Having sent off Yar Mahomet with the letter to the Lueenaib, I summoned my men, and told them what had taken place during the interview that morning.

Ibrahim, the Persian groom, offered his services to convey a letter to Samarcand; but I told him that if it were necessary to fly from Mazar-e-Shereef it would be better that we escaped all together, because the flight of one would damage the position of the others left behind. Before seeking safety in flight, it would be advisable to wait and see whether Khosh Deel Khan would despatch my letter to General Kaufmann.

The following day, October 21st, Mahomet Musin Khan came early in the morning to know if I would lend the Governor-General my uniform, the shape of which had pleased him so much that he wished to have one made like it.

* After the return of General Stolietoff, on account of ill health, to Tashkent, the Russian Embassy was placed under the charge of General Razgonoff—C. M.

The uniform was given to the Lueenaib's secretary, and the next day returned with Khosh Deel Khan's thanks.

When the English entered Cabul they found, among other things, a Russian uniform, which occasioned immense sensation and alarm throughout India and England. It is quite as likely as not that this uniform was no other than the one which the Governor-General of Afghan Turkestan had made for himself.

During the 9th and 10th of October I prepared my report for General Kaufmann. On the morning of the 11th, as usual, came Mahomet Musin Khan. I gave him the letter, and begged him to send it off to Samarcand.

He refused to take it.

Why?

Because the Lueenaib could not despatch my letter by a special courier. I should have to wait till the post arrived from Cabul, when my letter would be sent on to its destination. It could not go before.

This made me explode with anger. I could not but now recognise that I was a complete prisoner in the hands of the Afghans, and that they were desirous that my condition should not be

made known to the authorities at Samarcand. This belief of mine was borne out by several significant circumstances. On the night succeeding the audience, the guard placed over my residence had been increased by five men. The same night also a sentry had appeared at the door of my lodgings. The following night, the 21st of October, another post had been established by the guard, and Yar Mahomet had commenced to sleep outside my door. Independent of all this, to render me the more defenceless, Mahomet Musin Khan had, the night before, decoyed into the Afghan service my interpreter Mustapha, offering him increased salary and an honourable post at the court of the Ameer Shere Ali.

I gave full vent to my anger. I denounced the Afghans as a lying, treacherous, fickle lot; and declared that I would find my way to the court of Shere Ali—that I would—and would there see whether he approved of the measures taken against me by Khosh Deel Khan at Mazar-e-Shereef. Mahomet Musin Khan I told to be off, adding that I did not wish to see his face any more.

Without saying a word, the Afghan secretary left my presence, maintaining a quiet demeanour.

After this scene he fell ill, and for several days did not show himself at my lodgings.

Directly he was gone I summoned my people, and explained to them the position in which we found ourselves placed, asking, at the same time, their opinion on the matter.

In reply, the whole of them declared that they would follow me wherever I asked them to go. In general council we decided to wait for an answer from Cabul until the end of the longest period required for the journey, *i.e.*, fourteen days, reckoning the date from October the 20th, when the courier had been sent to Cabul by the Lueenaib. If, by the 3rd of November, no answer arrived, then we should consider ourselves as prisoners, and on the night of the 4th break through the guard and escape to Bokhara, *via* the ferry of Karkeep. In the meantime, we should endeavour to obtain some firearms, and, if we found this impossible, provide ourselves with cold steel weapons.

The cold steel weapons—two Afghan knives—we managed to obtain through some Uzbek smiths, who came to shoe our horses. The men refused, however, for any amount of money, to bring us firearms. Bitterly did I regret

not having taken the advice of experienced friends at Samarcand, who had urged me to provide myself, at the very least, with a couple of good Berdans.

We began to study the topography of the locality in which our lot was cast. The stream flowing through my courtyard issued from a neighbouring court, separated from it by a wall eighteen feet in height. The aperture for the passage of the stream was sufficiently large for a man to crawl through. In the neighbouring courtyard lived a family consisting of a man, his wife, and two children. A wall about six feet high was the only barrier separating the enclosure from the street.

The sentry guarding the entrance to my lodgings might easily be avoided, by passing through the building to the spot where the stream flowed through the wall. The only dangerous obstacle to our escape was Yar Mahomet, sleeping outside my door.

On reaching the outside of the town we meant to proceed in a north-westerly direction, and hide ourselves the first day among the sandhills near Mazar-e-Shereef. At nightfall we would start afresh, and if we encountered a Turco-

man encampment, we would steal some horses for ourselves, and then ride off as far as our steeds would carry us.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CAPTIVE BECOMES GUEST.

Arrival of a courier from Cabul—The Afghans consent to convey a letter to General Kaufmann—A second interview with the Lueenaib—I am treated to a little Afghan music—The Governor-General's opinions respecting the war with the English—The Lueenaib refuses to give permission to my attendants to walk about the streets of Mazar-e-Shereef—Dull days of my captivity—I find myself the "guest" of Sher Ali—Arrangements for my ride to Maimene and Herat—Composition of the military escort—The Lueenaib refuses to give me a parting interview—I make my peace with Mahomet Musin Khan—The strength and equipment of an Afghan cavalry regiment—Easy manners of Afghan officers—Afghan officers rarely have recourse to the "cat."

EARLY in the morning of the 25th of October Yar Mahomet, with a shining face, presented himself at the door of my lodgings, and informed me that, the night before, a *tchapar* had arrived from Cabul; and that, to-day, the post would be sent on to Bokhara. Consequently, if I wished to despatch a letter to General Kaufmann the courier could convey it for me to Samarcand, whence it would be sent on by the Russian officials to Tashkent.

I gave the Afghan the letter, but I had no hope at the time that it would be forwarded to its destination. I imagined that the Afghans wished to deceive me.

On the 27th of October the Lueenaib invited me to visit him in the evening. Mahomet Musin Khan came with an escort of Khazadars to conduct me to the palace, and we proceeded thither under the same circumstances that had marked my visit on the 20th. The interview took place in the garden, on a raised platform covered with rugs, and containing several arm-chairs. A company of infantry, as on the previous occasion, were drawn up perpendicular with the palace.

Khosh Deel Khan was habited in a black uniform, cut after the Russian fashion, and trimmed with gold lace on the collar and facings, copied from the dress I wore. White breeches reached to his knees; his head was covered with a small grey Afghan helmet; he had patent leather boots on his feet, and white cotton gloves on his hands. Mahomet Musin Khan remained with us during the audience, and sat alongside the Meerza Neezam and an old chief, the head of a tribe of Hezarè Barbars, living in the mountains near the Cabul road.

On approaching the Lueenaib he rose from his chair, advanced towards me, and shook hands. He had heard, he said, that I was dull at home, and had invited me to his palace to enliven me. Would I not like to hear a little Afghan music? Of course, the music of Afghanistan could not stand comparison with that of Russia, and he (the Lueenaib) felt some scruples in offering me such a poor entertainment; but he had nothing better to enliven me with.

I replied that I had long wished to hear an Afghan band play. Every morning I had heard in my lodgings the distant sounds of music, but they were too far away for me to distinguish them clearly. The Lueenaib, thereupon, gave orders for a band to be brought into the garden.

In a few minutes' time the musicians marched up close to the platform, and commenced to play. The instruments comprised a big drum, six smaller ones, five flutes, three horns, one tambourine, one triangle, and a set of castanets. The bandsmen wore red uniforms and helmets. They carried no arms. The bandmaster wore a black coat and a broad flat cap.

The first piece performed, the Lueenaib told me, was in honour of myself. I thanked him.

Afterwards the band played in succession slow, ordinary, and quick marches; during which, at my request, the infantry company marched in time with the music. This was all the musicians knew, the Lueenaib then informed me; the band having only recently been formed, and the bandsmen playing by note. What they did know, they certainly played very well, and in harmony: I did not hear a false note during the whole of the performance.

The Lueenaib then questioned me about Tashkent, Samarcand, St. Petersburg, and the recent campaign with the Turks. Referring to the impending war with the English, he expressed his opinion that the Afghans alone would be able to settle them, and annex not only Peshawur, but also the Vale of Cashmere. To my question as to whether the Ameer would receive the English Embassy at Cabul, the Lueenaib replied, "Never."

Afterwards he enquired whether I wanted anything, and if I was satisfied with my household arrangements. I thereupon kept my promise to my men by asking that they might be allowed to go to the mosque to pray.

"I cannot allow them to do so," replied Khosh Deel Khan.

"But why?" I urged. "My men are dressed as Mussulmans, and if I attract danger by wearing my Russian uniform, the same is not the case with them. They have nothing about them to show that they are Russians, and belong to my suite."

"Impossible," answered the Lueenaib, emphatically.

This audience lasted until one o'clock in the morning, and somewhat reassured me. The days dragged along heavily after my interview with Khosh Deel Khan. Calculating on a rapid ride through Afghanistan, and not wishing to encumber myself with more baggage than was absolutely necessary, I had not brought a single book with me. Having nothing else to do, I read over and over again the bits of old newspapers wrapped round my things. To kill the time, I took to the spade, and cleaned out the canal in the courtyard. Every morning I observed on the gravel the footmarks of the sentry that had been marching up and down, the night before, in front of my lodgings. Mahomet Musin Khan kept clear of my courtyard. This rather pleased me than otherwise, as I had no wish to see the face of my gaoler. Learning during my

conversations with Yar Mahomet that there were public dancers at Mazar-e-Shereef, I asked permission of the Lueenaib to have them brought to me. In reply, I was told that they had all of them gone to a wedding at Tash Koorgan. I then requested that some performing serpents might be sent to amuse me; but was informed that at that period of the year they were always in a dormant condition. In the end, I had to content myself with the stories related in turns by my followers. Nazeer Ali Reeza kept himself aloof from me, being discontented with the salary paid him on my account by Mahomet Musin Khan. The food supplied to me and my men was very good, and in this respect we had nothing to complain of.

On the 18th of October, Ibrahim, in bringing, as usual, his report concerning the condition of the horses, remarked that they were exceedingly lively, as though they had a presentiment of a ride before long. The next morning, when I put the usual question to Yar Mahomet as to whether the courier had yet arrived from Cabul, he replied in the negative. Towards noon, however, came Mahomet Musin Khan, and with a calm, matter-of-fact tone, as though he were

informing me of some ordinary intelligence, observed that the long-expected courier had just arrived from Cabul with the permission from Shere Ali, and that it had been decided that I should ride away from the town at four o'clock in the afternoon. Having delivered the message, Mahomet Musin Khan took his departure, remarking that he would call again directly and inform me of the dispositions made by the Governor-General for my journey.

In an hour's time he came back, and said that, as I was the most honourable guest of the Ameer, orders had been issued that I should be cared for as though I were the apple of his eye. An escort would be given me for my safety; the whole of the expenses along the road would be defrayed by the Ameer; a Djamadar,* named Meer Ali, would be appointed to conduct me as far as Herat, and would be furnished with funds sufficient to provide me and my servants and horses with food and provender; a detachment of thirty troopers would be assigned for my protection as far as Maimene; and, beyond that town to Herat, I should be escorted by 300 men, as a protection against the Turcomans.

* Lieutenant.

Finally, on account of my rank, an "Adjutan" (Lieutenant-Colonel) would be permanently attached to the convoy. He (Mahomet Musin Khan) would advise me strongly on one point, to listen to the wishes of the chief of the convoy ; because, whatever he did would be to the advantage of my safety and good fortune.

This I promised to do, if I considered the dispositions of the chief of the convoy actuated by good sense and friendly feeling. Otherwise I should certainly disregard them.

Mahomet Musin Khan then said that he would willingly accompany me, although his health was not good, but the chief of the convoy, Meer Ali, was a man wholly to be relied upon. Meer Ali would be the bearer of a letter from the Lueenaib to the Governor-General of Herat, and on his arrival at Maimene he would send it on in advance by a courier. The letter would contain a request for the despatch of a convoy from Herat to meet mine on the road. If this convoy failed to set out in good time, its backwardness would have no retarding effect on my journey, since the Maimene escort would, in that case, conduct me direct to Herat.

I expressed a desire to see the Lueenaib

before leaving Mazar-e-Shereef, but Mahomet Musin Khan said that this was impossible, as Khosh Deel Khan was ill. On my afterwards repeating the request, Mahomet Musin Khan replied that the Lueenaib was too busily engaged counting money to receive visitors. No doubt my presence at Mazar-e-Shereef had so disturbed the Governor-General that he was only too glad to get rid of me, without seeing my face any more.

Thanking Mahomet Musin Khan for his attention towards me, I gave him a present, and a large stock of quinine, and, bidding him good-bye, saw him no more. In recalling him now to my remembrance, I make my peace with him. He was a faithful servant to his sovereign, and fulfilled his orders with exactness.

Shortly before four o'clock in the afternoon, arrived the Adjutant appointed to accompany me as far as Sheebeer Khan, and announced that the escort was ready and waiting for me at the gate. He introduced himself to me as Ahmed Ali Addijan, adjutant of the Abassi cavalry regiment.

I bade farewell to the Afghan servants, and giving them all presents of money, quitted the

courtyard. On passing the wicket and the enclosure beyond, I saw, for the first time since my arrival on the 19th of October, my horses again. Ali Reeza was deeply affected by my departure. In earnest tones he wished me a speedy return to Mazar-e-Shereef.

Mounting my horse I rode into the street, along which was formed the escort, composed of two Djamadars, four Dafadars, and forty troopers.

An Afghan cavalry regiment consists of four squadrons. Occasionally regiments may be met with having six squadrons; but four is the general rule. Each squadron consists of 100 horsemen. To every ten horsemen there is a Dafadar, armed with a carbine, a sabre, and a lance six feet long, the latter having a small flag attached to the end of the shaft. The troopers are armed with smooth-bore carbines and sabres. When formed up, the troopers stand ten abreast, each rank at a distance of a pace from the other. The Dafadar stands to the right of his troop, and the officers in front. All the men are mounted on good horses, some of Karabairi origin, and others bred in Katagan, a province lying between the River Khooloom and Badakshan, along the Bamian route. Turcoman horses

are sometimes seen among the cavalry, but not very often, on account of their dearness. The horses are always the property of the men, and when they die from causes for which the owner is not responsible, the Ameer gives him four *tillas*, or £2, towards the purchase of a fresh one, usually costing not less than ten *tillas*. The saddles are English. The metal portion of the cartridge pouches and belts bear English marks and inscriptions, such as, "First Bengal Regiment of Light Cavalry," "God save the Queen," and so forth. All the metal part of the men's equipment is purchased in India, at the Afghan Government's expense. The saddles are the property of the State. The troopers receive 26 rupees a month, and are compelled to clothe themselves and feed themselves and their horses out of this amount. In time of war, or in the event of a march to a locality where provisions are scarce, victuals are conveyed to the halting places at the Government's expense, and there sold to the troops at a price fixed beforehand by the military authorities. To every two horsemen is assigned one baggage horse. In this manner every regiment has 200 baggage horses, or *yabas*. To every *yaba* is assigned a

man taken from the ranks. Thus, each regiment consists of 600 men and 600 horses.

The relations between the officers and men remind one of those existing in the Turkish army. If an Afghan officer drinks tea, a number of soldiers are sure to sit around him. If he smokes a *kaliana*, all the soldiers gather near him and await their turn; the *kaliana* having gone the round of the privates, returns again to the officer. If a soldier smokes a pipe, the officer asks him to let him have a draw at it. Should a soldier take from the folds of his dress a tobacco pouch, in order to put a plug of tobacco under his tongue, the officer inserts his finger and thumb into the pouch also, and takes a pinch of tobacco. On the other hand, should the officer take out his own pouch, the soldier helps himself in a similar manner to his tobacco.

During the whole of my ride through Afghan Turkestan, I encountered only one officer who kept himself aloof from the soldiers. This exception to the general rule was the Adjutant of the Zmaini Regiment, Hamid Khan, by birth a Sayid, or descendant of the Prophet. But, in this instance, it was not his military rank that kept him aloof from the soldiers so much as his

descent, because Ahmed Ali Addijan, the adjutant who escorted me from Mazar-e-Shereef, was on terms of the utmost familiarity with his men. I did not observe that this mutual freedom of manner had any detrimental effect on the discipline of the troops. The men obeyed the commands of their officers with docility, and never displayed insubordination when sentenced to be thrashed. Indeed, it is exceedingly rare that the officers employ the lash. During the whole of my sojourn in Afghanistan I only saw the punishment inflicted twice; on both occasions on men who had stolen hay from my horses. The complaint against the pilferers was lodged by Meer Ali Khan.

CHAPTER V.

INCIDENTS OF THE RIDE FROM MAZAR-E-SHEREEF.

Departure from the capital of Afghan Turkestan—Takhtapool and Sheerabad—Attention and foresight displayed by Mahomet Musin Khan—Effects of being a guest of the Ameer—Mustapha becomes Mustapha Khan—Courtesy of the Afghan soldiers—The River Balkh, and the ruins of ancient Bactra—The bridge across the stream—The decadence of the town—Arrival at the shrine of Zeinal Obedin Baimar—A Lahore monk who had never heard of the existence of the Russians—Meer Ali Khan's misbehaviour—The Afghans endeavour to pillage the nomads—Meer Ali Khan beaten, both morally and physically—Effects of kind treatment on the nomads—Meer Ali Khan's misbehaviour forgiven and forgotten.

OUR horses had stood so long in the stables at Mazar-e-Shereef that they were exceedingly lively, and required all our strength to keep them under control.

We rode away from the Afghan city in a direction south of Takhtapool and Sheerabad; passing the former at a distance of about a mile and a half from its walls, and the latter at a distance of a thousand yards. Further on we left behind us the *Kishlak* of Deedaadi, and halted for the night in the steppe, near the

ruins of a Rabat,* alongside a stream flowing from Sheerabad through Deedaadi and beyond. During the night halt I was struck with the attention and foresight which Mahomet Musin Khan had displayed in fitting me out for the journey. In the first place, besides the Djama-dar Meer Ali Khan, he had appointed to my suite two cooks, a scullion, and a groom. In the second place, the escort had been furnished for my comfort with two tents,† a portable cooking stove, several rugs, some mattresses, a fur cloak, a candlestick of prodigious weight and dimensions, a quantity of tallow candles, a toilette set, a metal teapot, in shape like a pitcher, and a number of plates and dishes, together with tea-cups and saucers sufficient for the whole of my party. All these articles were carried on the backs of three pack horses. In case any accident should happen to these animals, two extra ones were attached to the transport service of our little column.

* A Rabat is a house of call for travellers. They are mostly constructed for the sake of saving the soul of the benefactor. Most of the Rabats in Turkestan were constructed by Abdullah, a Khan of Bokhara, living in the 16th century. The natives affirm that he constructed no less than a thousand and one Rabats.

† I also had one of my own.

From the outset I experienced the beneficial effects of being an honourable guest of the Ameer. Every individual attached to the convoy did his very utmost to anticipate my wants, and execute my wishes. After the camp had been pitched for the night, the Djamadar Meer Ali Khan and the Adjutant Ahmed Ali Addijan came to my tent, in turns, every other minute, to enquire whether I wanted anything, or whether I was comfortable, &c. The convoy soldiers manifested as much zeal as their superiors; and not only towards myself, but also towards my followers. Mustapha was no longer designated plain Mustapha, but Mustapha Khan. The impatience on the part of the Afghans, observable during the journey from Patta Keesar to Mazar-e-Shereef, had completely vanished, and left no traces behind. The Afghans ceased to take away the *kaliana* when my men approached it to enjoy a whiff; and not only did they allow them to use their pitchers, but they themselves also drank tea out of my tumblers.* The order from the Ameer to the Lueenaib to take good care of me must have been couched in very strong terms, and the Lueenaib must have given strenuous

* It is usual in Russia for men to drink tea out of tumblers.—C. M.

instructions to the officers and men of my escort to watch over me and look after my comfort. Even my horses felt the benefit of the Ameer's order; the Afghans no longer giving them straw, but feeding them entirely upon clover. This spoilt my men to such a degree that they regularly demanded clover, even in barren places where no sum of money could have possibly secured a supply, and compelled Meer Ali Khan, in despair, to come to me to complain. My grooms no longer looked after my pack horses, but allowed them to be led by the Afghans: themselves riding alongside, and now and again indulging in an encouraging cry.

When I began to undress myself, in order to lie down, the Adjutant commenced to help me pull off my boots. I resisted at first, but afterwards allowed him to do so. I should observe that the Adjutant was more than 50 years old, and that, in his attendance upon me, he was assisted by his son, a private in the Abassi cavalry regiment. The Adjutant was an Afghan by birth.

The following day we rose with the sun. As it was known that we should find water if we marched for seven or eight hours, we did not

fix beforehand the locality of the night halt. All we did was to decide that when we grew tired we should pitch our tents.

The road was perfectly level. To the left, not far from the spurs of the Paropamisus, were irrigation canals and cultivated fields. At seven and a half miles from Deedaadi the road was intersected by the River Balkh, locally known as the Bandi-Barbari. Bandi means "beyond the pond"—the dam is constructed at the town of Balkh itself,—and the term Barbari is applied to the wild people living among the northern spurs of the Paropamisus and the Hindoo Koosh.

The River Balkh flows among rocks along a ravine with steep banks. Across this ravine, which is about 120 feet wide, is thrown an excellent stone bridge, consisting of three spans, and designated Eemam Mookhr. The river itself has abundance of water. It is more than 90 feet broad, and flows in a single channel. From the level of the water to the balustrade on the bridge is about 30 feet. Below the bridge, the river flows in a north-westerly direction to the town of Balkh, where there is a dam erected, and where canals distribute the water

over the country.* Immediately beyond the river commence the ruins of ancient Bactra, which, stretching along the road for four miles, are visible far away to the north and north-west. The ruins consist of burnt brick, yellow and red, and covered with glaze. Neither walls nor towers are to be seen anywhere. The sites of buildings are known by the mounds of sand concealing them.

The road beyond the River Balkh was, as hitherto, perfectly level. Numerous canals, full of water, stretched alongside it, and at places the road crossed them by means of bridges. Where the ruins of Bactra did not interfere with agricultural operations, the ground was cultivated.

At the end of fourteen miles, a little to the right of the road, was the small *Kishlak* of Ogan Kala, partly inhabited by Uzbeks engaged in agriculture. On our approach many people hastened towards the road; but the Adjutant made several soldiers advance and stand between

* Until 1872 the principal town in Afghan Turkestan was Balkh. In that year the greater number of the inhabitants died of cholera; and afterwards the residence of the Governor-General was removed to Mazar-e-Shereef, where there are to-day about 25,000 people. Balkh is now an insignificant village, and possesses no importance whatever.

them and me until I had passed by. After riding twenty-nine miles we came to the Mazar, or holy place, of Zainal Obedin Baimar, with a Rabat near it. The locality is the resting-place of a saint, whose name is borne by the Mazar. He was the brother of Eemam Reeza, a saint buried at Meshed. Cultivated fields could be seen on either side of the road as far as our eye could reach, and everywhere irrigation water existed in abundance.

On seeing the Mazar, the Adjutant asked my permission to stop at the shrine and pray. The tomb of the saint was inside a stone building, the cupola of which was already in ruins. The *metcheti* comprised several huts, affording shelter to the guardians of the tomb, who numbered five men. The monks wore their hair extremely long, and were nearly naked. Around the sanctuary were flower-beds, and a garden. Two hundred paces from the spot was the refuge for strangers.

I entered the sanctuary just as I was; that is to say, in my boots. No one took any notice of this. The soldiers prayed very attentively, some of them being excited to ecstasy, beating their heads against the tomb and the ground, and sobbing

loudly. Remembering the advice of Mustapha, I thought it advisable to leave them, and hastened into the yard.

There, a monk came up to me, and, informing me that he was a native of Lahore, enquired whether I was not an Englishman. I gave him an answer, and it then transpired that he had never heard of the existence of Russians. "Had they as much money," he asked, "as the English? Were they as powerful?" and was proceeding, with increased interest, to question me further, when Ibrahim the groom came up, and drove him away.

It was a common complaint of this follower of mine that I did not support my dignity as, in his opinion, I was bound to do. Over and over again he counselled me not to lower myself by talking to mere strangers, and at Neeshapoor, he drove away, without any order on my part, two Afghans who attempted to speak to me, telling them that I was a *Kaliam Sahib*, or "great man," and could not, therefore, be expected to give an audience to every casual stranger.

When the soldiers had finished praying we mounted our horses again, and rode off to seek a place for the night halt. I refused to remain

too near the Mazar itself, on account of the extensive burying-ground existing around it. The locality selected for the halt was about a mile away from Mazar Zainal Obedin Baimar, and not not far from a Turcoman *aoul*, or encampment.

As soon as the tents were pitched, Meer Ali Khan set off for the encampment, to obtain a sheep or two, and some fuel. The Turcomans, on his arrival, refused to sell him either one or the other, alleging that their flocks were a great way off on the hills, and that they had no wood ; being themselves compelled to burn bushes instead.

This refusal not pleasing Meer Ali Khan, he proceeded to thrash the Turcomans. The cries of the men summoned the women to the spot, and they set to with sticks, and gave the Djamadar a good drubbing. Meer Ali Khan, finding himself getting the worst of it, shouted loudly for assistance, and the Adjutant gave orders for the soldiers to hurry to the encampment and rescue him. The men were starting off with their carbines to attack the nomads, when, having been an eye-witness of the whole scene, I ordered the Adjutant to return the moment he rescued the Djamadar. I added that if he did not fulfil my orders I should write to the Lueenaib, who would censure him

for allowing a disturbance to take place. Ahmed Ali Addijan tried to make out that they were all doing their best for me, but I replied that such efforts were not to my liking, and that I should not allow any people to be killed for my sake. I should refuse to have any dinner at all that day—twenty-four hours without food would not kill me.

The Adjutant drove off the nomads, and followed my instructions by returning at once to the camp with Meer Ali; the latter limping along painfully over the ground, supported by several soldiers. On reaching my tent, I gave him a good scolding for employing violence against the nomads. If I had known, I said, that force would be used to obtain food for me, I should have refused to be the guest of his Sovereign. In all probability, he would not easily escape the consequences of his present misbehaviour, for I should certainly write to the Lueenaib about him.

The wretched Djamadar, beaten both morally and physically, limped away to his tent, and remained there until the morning.

I then myself began to see about the dinner. First of all I went to the Turcoman encampment,

and the nomads who had refused to sell anything to the Djamadar begged me to accept some chickens, milk, eggs, and rice, and a log of wood. Money in payment they refused to take, saying that I was an Eltchi, or Envoy of the White Tsar, and that they always wished to have such as their guests. Of course, I insisted all the same that the money should be accepted.

In the evening the Adjutant came, accompanied by his Djafadars and Dafadars, to intercede for Meer Ali Khan. The soldiers gathered round the tent, curious to know how I would deal with the application. Before long I gave way to the Adjutant, and empowered him to proceed to Meer Ali Khan, and inform him that the past had been forgiven and forgotten.

CHAPTER VI.

THE RIDE TO SARIPOOL.

Departure from Mazar Zeinal Obedin Baimar—Hospitality of the people of Salman—A race after antelopes—The plain of Sheebeerkhan—A fresh escort—Absence of wheeled vehicles in Afghan Turkestan—Houses of refuge along the road—The River Saripool—Djeedailik—Unhealthy character of the Valley of Saripool—Curious designations of the settlements—Arrival at the town of Saripool.

WHEN we set out from Mazar Zeinal Obedin Baimar on the morning of the 2nd of November, we had before us a long march of thirty-eight miles, to the settlement of Salmazar, situated about two miles to the south of Sheebeerkhan. For the first five miles we rode across a level plain, and then, traversing a small mountain spur, covered with gravel, arrived at the village of Salman. Through this settlement flows a stream of brackish water; but the locality is intersected with irrigation canals, circulating through the fields, and containing water of excellent quality. The village comprises forty houses. The people are all Uzbeks, engaged in agricultural pursuits.

On our approach the whole village turned out to meet us, and begged us to halt there for the night. Many of the people brought wheaten cakes, water melons, and sweet melons ; and when I announced to them that I could not prolong my stay at Salman they brought me a sheep.

Halting at Salman half an hour, we pushed on afresh. The road traversed two small mountain passes, and then entered a valley, two or three miles wide, and enclosed by mountains not very high, and with soft outlines. Along the valley we rode for nearly fifteen miles, the ground being level and smooth the whole way. The valley and the sides of the mountains were covered with high grass. For want of water the valley is unfit for pastoral purposes.

While traversing the valley we came across some antelopes. One herd of them, fleeing towards the south, was chased by four of our soldiers. Seeing themselves followed, the antelopes turned towards the north, right in our track. A Djamadar and three soldiers thereupon dashed from the convoy to cut them off. Unfortunately, the splendid Turcoman mare of the Djamadar caught her foot in a rat's hole, and

broke her leg ; her rider likewise being severely bruised by the fall. The unlucky animal was shot by its master there and then.

The three soldiers, not observing the accident, continued the pursuit, firing repeatedly at the herd, but, being unsuccessful, had to return at last empty-handed to the escort.

On reaching the end of the valley we ascended the mountain, on the slope of which was a solitary house, situated alongside the dam of a small reservoir. The water flowed into the pond from two small streams, both brackish, and neither of any volume. Close to the dam was a stone trough, for watering horses. The ascent of the mountain, as far as the reservoir, was long but easy ; the road was covered with stones, but in nowise presented difficulties to our advance. Beyond the reservoir the road turned to the south-west, and in that direction proceeded for nearly three quarters of a mile ; at first rising to the summit of the pass, and then descending into a high valley, slightly undulating, but wholly adapted for travelling purposes. Along this valley the road twined in a westerly direction for about ten miles. The valley was covered with excellent grass, and afforded pasturage for numerous flocks

of sheep, belonging to Turcomans wandering in the vicinity.

At the end of the valley the road descended to the extensive plain of Sheebeer Khan, watered by the River Saripool. At the foot of the descent, we found a stream of fresh water. The descent was covered with brushwood, as also the banks of the stream. Beyond, for more than two miles, the plain consisted of sandy soil, growing *saksaul* and tamarisks. Afterwards we came to fields intersected by irrigation canals. From the descent from the valley to the village of Salmazar, the distance was about eight miles. The road was perfectly level.

Salmazar is a village of forty houses, and is situated on both sides of the River Saripool; here having a breadth of fifty feet, and flowing at the foot of steep banks, thirty feet high. The inhabitants are Uzbeks, and live in *kibitkas* outside the houses, which latter afford shelter to their sheep and cattle. Round about the village are numerous gardens, and everywhere there is an abundance of water. In Salmazar itself is the tomb of some saint or other. Two miles from it, to the north, lies the town of Sheebeer Khan.

It was already sunset when our little cavalcade rode into Salmazar, but I found awaiting my arrival, in one of the gardens of the village, a double tent, and inside it tea, dinner, and a soft couch. For all these comforts I was indebted to the Governor of Sheebeer Khan, Djernel (General) Kadeer Khan, the commander of the military force that had taken Maimene four years previous.

At Salmazar, the troopers of the Abassi Cavalry Regiment, who had accompanied me thus far, had to return again to Mazar-e-Shereef; the task of escorting me thence to Maimene falling upon the soldiers of the Hussein Regiment, quartered at Sheebeer Khan. The new convoy, under the command of Major Goolam Mahomet, already awaited me at Salmazar; and immediately upon my arrival relieved the other guard.

At the request of Ahmed Ali Addijan, I furnished him with a written declaration, certifying my safe arrival at Salmazar, and expressing my satisfaction at his conduct *en route*. The Adjutant decided to rest a day at Salmazar, and return home by another road, a level one running through Sheebeer Khan and Aktcha.

It is a curious circumstance that, notwithstanding the suitability of the region for wheeled transport, not a single vehicle exists in Afghan Turkestan. Only very recently, at the express orders of the Lueenaib, four *arbas** have been constructed at Mazar-e-Shereef for the four battalions quartered inside the town. One of these *arbas* I saw on the road. It was being drawn by a pair of bullocks. The wheels were a yard and a half in diameter, and the felloe, instead of consisting of a single piece of wood, as is invariably the case in Russian Turkestan, was composed of several triangular pieces, strengthened by a tire. I was informed that the Lueenaib intended ordering several more of these *arbas* to be constructed, and distributed among the people of his province.

Two roads run from Sheebeer Khan to Maimene. One of these traverses a plain as

* "The only vehicle used by the natives in Russian Turkestan is a large wide cart on two immense wheels, called an *arba*. The wheels are very roughly constructed with wide felloes and heavy spokes, usually made of elm-wood, and without tires. The shafts are prolongations of the main body, which rest on a wide strap over the back of the horse, where the driver sits on a small saddle, with his feet on the shafts, instead of taking his place in the cart. Sometimes these *arbas* are covered with matting, and although the vehicle is rude, yet it is comfortable, because, on account of the great size of the wheels, the inequalities of the road are not much noticed."—SCHUYLER.

far as Khairabad, and then proceeds along the River Sangalak. The other runs direct to Saripool, and afterwards across the mountains.

Formerly, when numerous Rabats with cisterns of water existed along the Khairabad route, it was the principal highway of traffic; but to-day the Rabats are in ruins, and the cisterns choked up, and there exists between Sheebeer Khan and Khairabad a stretch of sixty miles of waterless country, unfit for travelling. Caravans now-a-days always use the Saripool route; and four years ago, when the Afghans marched against Maimene, the commander had the road across the mountains adapted for the passage of his artillery.

According to the information which I gathered from the people of the locality; the distance between Salmazar and Saripool is from twenty-five to thirty miles; which to me was only a trifling march. Major Goolam Mahomet, however, asked me to break it halfway. I refused.

We started early on the morning of the 3rd of November for Saripool. At half a mile from Salmazar the road crossed over to the left bank of the Saripool river. The ford is not deep, and

the bed of the stream is stony. When the river is at its height, it is necessary to make a detour to the left, in order to avoid the crossing. The locality is perfectly flat, the fields are well tilled, and water flows in abundance on all sides.

Having ridden fourteen miles and reached the ruins of Djeedailik, we entered a broad valley, surrounded by lofty hills. The breadth of the valley varied from a mile to two and a half. During the whole of the ride to Djeedailik the only settlements we passed were two small villages, both designated Karakeen, and situated one on the right side of the river and one on the left. The inhabitants were Uzbek peasants, dwelling in *kibitkas*. Along the river we saw numbers of tents, belonging to the nomads of the locality.

Just before reaching Djeedailik the road crossed the river again to the right bank of the stream, and continued on that side all the way to Saripool. Two miles beyond Djeedailik was the village of Khazret Eemam, with ten houses and the shrine of a saint. Four miles beyond this was the larger village of Said Abad, consisting of one hundred houses, and established on a high hill on the right bank of the

river. Here the River Saripool splits itself into two streams, flowing between steep banks. From the town of Saripool to Said Abad the river flows along a single channel, between banks so low that in spring inundations take place. At Said Abad the road mounts to the top of the hill on which the village is built, traverses part of the settlement, and, after crossing a bridge spanning a broad irrigation canal, stretches along the mountain slope for a mile and a half. Beyond, the road descends to the bottom of a valley, along which it runs to the town itself. At the twenty-third mile is Kal Kishlak, and to the right of it the *kishlaks* of Koor and Basude. To the left, at the foot of the mountain, is the *kishlak* of Kalako. At the twenty-eighth mile commence the gardens of Saripool, and a mile beyond there is a wooden bridge across the river to the town itself. Along the whole of the road the ground is clayey. No impediments or obstructions whatever exist. Reeds suitable for fuel exist in abundance, and also serve as food for animals.

The valley of the River Saripool is regarded as extremely unhealthy, on account of the prevalence of ague and fever. One species of

fever is particularly rife among the inhabitants. The designations of the *kishlaks* serve as an index to the sanitary condition of the valley. Thus, the *kishlak* of Kal means the "Scab Settlement;" the *kishlak* of Kal, the "Blind Settlement;" and the *kishlak* of Kalako, the "Settlement of many afflicted with scrofula."

CHAPTER VII.

ENTHUSIASTIC RECEPTION AT SARIPOOL.

Saripool—The populace escort me to my quarters—Mustapha exhorts the people not to take so much interest in me—Display of feeling in the streets—Our ride from Saripool to Maimene—Mountains, dales, and gorges—Koortchee—Meer Ali Khan again illtreats the people—The defile of Beltcherag—The escort reinforced by troops from Maimene—Unpleasant dilatoriness of the officer in command—I insist on entering Maimene without stopping on the road to break the journey—I lose all command over myself and threaten the officer—Arrival at last at Maimene.

THE town of Saripool contains about three thousand inhabitants. It extends broadly along both sides of the river, and is surrounded by extensive gardens. In the centre of the town is the Bala Hissar, or Citadel. The inhabitants are Uzbeks.

The day of my entry into the town was market day. The road to my quarters lay through the market square. The whole of the populace thronged the path, and saluted me with loud hurrahs. The mass of them conducted me to my lodgings. These were situated in the best house in the town, belonging to the Koorbashi, or Police-master.

The house was surrounded by a high wall. In order to get a glimpse at me, the people crowded on the roofs of the neighbouring houses, and some of them mounted the wall.

The Koorbashi was away busily superintending the arrangements for my dinner. The Major commanding my escort was down with ague. Meer Ali had gone to the Bazaar, to change my Bokharan money into Persian krans and Indian rupees.

Mustapha, therefore, took upon himself to expostulate with the people. "What are you looking at?" he demanded of the Uzbeks squatting on the wall. "He's not a *maimoon* (monkey), but a man like yourselves." His words, however, had no effect on the people. They continued to crowd round my house, and gaze at me from the top of the garden wall, with as much earnestness as ever.

To gratify the curiosity of the Uzbeks, I went outside into the street. From the compliments I received from the people, and the reverence they paid me, I came to the conclusion that it was not mere inquisitiveness that had drawn together the crowd, but a desire to honour in me the Russians, whose arrival they ardently long for.

The people did not disperse until the shades

of night fell upon Saripool: they then retired to their houses. The Major, hearing that I had gone into the streets, displayed the utmost alarm at my conduct. Notwithstanding that the fever was strong upon him, he came into my room, and earnestly begged me not to go outside the house any more.

On the 4th of November we continued our journey. For the first two miles the road ran across the plain to the foot of the mountains winding along the course of the Meerza Aoulang, a small river falling into the Saripool at the town itself. Afterwards we entered a narrow valley enclosed by insignificant mountains, and, still following the winds of the river, rode for eight miles, whence we crossed over to the heights on the right side of the Meerza Aoulang, on account of the path along the river becoming narrow and inconvenient. Two miles beyond we descended again to the river, and entered the village of Sayad, the houses and gardens of which extend for a mile along the defile. Higher up the stream were visible three other villages, designated respectively Koor, Goor, and Foorgan Teke, and disposed along the left bank of the Meerza Aoulang.

After leaving Sayad the road lay along the right bank of the river, traversing the mountain spurs about sixty feet above the surface of the water. During the march of the Afghans to Maimene four years ago, the road was cut down and levelled; but the sappers restricting its breadth to the horizontal measurement of a field gun-carriage, it would be impossible during the passage of an army for a single horseman to pass by in the opposite direction; he would have to descend to the river, and ride along a path on the opposite bank. The deepened road stretches for two miles to the village of Koor, where it crosses over to the left bank, and afterwards runs permanently along that side of the river.

Beyond the village of Foorgan Teke the mountains enclosing the defile, hitherto soft in their outline, become rocky and precipitous. The entry into the rocky part of the defile is commanded by a small stone fortification. This consists of walls nine feet high, running athwart the defile, and pierced with loop-holes for musketry fire. It was constructed by the troops of the Khanate of Maimene, to defend the defile against the Afghan army.

The length of the rocky defile beyond is about

nine miles. The road is broken, and the advance impeded continually by large masses of rock, rendering it necessary to keep crossing from one side of the rivulet to the other. A mile beyond the fortification guarding the inlet of the defile, is another of the same description, and a little higher up the Meerza Aoulang, where the gorge somewhat broadens, is a quadrangular stone redoubt.

At the end of the twenty-third mile the defile comes to an end, and the road enters a broad deep valley enclosed by high mountains. A mile and a half from the road, perched on a prominent lofty precipice, is situated the village of Meerza Aoulang. The whole of the valley, along which twines from side to side the River Meerza Aoulang, fully justifies its designation—the “green meadow of the Meerza”—the entire surface, in spite of the lateness of the season, being covered with grass of lovely verdure.

From the bottom of the valley commences an ascent to the cluster of three mountain ridges serving as the watershed of the basins of the Rivers Saripool and Sangalak. The ascent is easy at first, but higher up the road becomes extremely steep. We had to rest our horses

nearly every minute. From the bottom of the ascent to the top the distance is about three miles. The road was repaired by the Afghans during their march to Maimene.

The descent from the mountain crossing is also about three miles in length. As the part faces the north, the surface of the brook was frozen; and, although the sun was shining brightly, the water had hardly melted at all. This will give an idea of the height of the mountain crossing. The descent passes through a narrow defile, with extremely rocky, precipitous sides. The cliffs are situated so close together that the rays of the sun never penetrate to the bottom of the gorge. On this account, although the defile is a mile lower down than the track across the summit of the mountain, vegetation is frozen hard in November, and our horses found it impossible to feed on the grass. At one part of the gorge the cliffs are so close to one another, that it would be easy to jump across the abyss.

All the way along the road our advance was impeded by masses of rock, at places so high, and so close together, as to almost render progress a matter of impossibility. The cliffs were covered with juniper trees and brush-

wood. After four miles of extremely difficult riding, we issued upon a broad valley, surrounded by high mountains, and, before long, encountered cultivated fields, and other evidences of the presence of a settled population. Five miles from the mouth of the gorge we came to the village of Koortchee. The whole of this day's ride amounted to forty-one miles.

The village of Koortchee consists of 300 houses. The people are Uzbeks, living in *kibitkas* pitched outside their cattle yards; but, here and there, a family may be seen dwelling in a house. In the middle of the village is the Bala Hissar, or Citadel.

On our arrival, I was conducted to a shelter under the arch-way of a house; but the Major, dissatisfied with the accommodation, thrashed the head man of the village, and ordered him to find me lodgings in the Bala Hissar. The inhabitants of Koortchee were obviously very poor. All their tents were in tatters, and none of the people could furnish us with an adequate supply of food. Meer Ali Khan went from tent to tent gathering spoonfuls of oil and handfuls of rice, distributing freely as he went blows and curses, and ordering his troopers to do the same.

Here, instead of giving money to the villagers, Meer Ali wrote out receipts, which I was told would be accounted for when the taxes were collected the next time.

On the 5th of November we rode twenty-four miles, to the village of Beltcherag. The road lay along the valley, and was perfectly flat; in places being rather marshy. Water was plentiful, but we saw no trees.* In spring, there is doubtless a splendid supply of forage obtainable in the valley.

Beltcherag stands in the midst of a broad, deep valley. It consists of 300 habitations. The people are Uzbeks, and, like their fellow-countrymen at Koortchee, dwell all of them in *kibitkas*. Their gardening operations are conducted on a very extensive scale.

We put up at the same dwelling which, four years earlier, had afforded shelter to Meer Ali Khan and a picket of cavalry, sent there to guard the communications of the Afghan force besieging Maimene.

The following morning, shortly after sunrise, we set off for Maimene itself. Immediately after quitting Beltcherag, we entered a rocky defile, enclosed by precipices. At the entrance to this,

on the right hand side, is the catacomb of a saint. A lamp (*tcherag*) is kept constantly burning inside the cell: hence the name of the locality. The soldiers of the escort dismounted to pray at the shrine, and my followers, even including Mustapha—a very bad Mussulman—took part in the adoration, in order not to look conspicuous.

The defile of Beltcherag is from three to six hundred yards wide, and is cultivated and covered with gardens belonging to the people of the village. The road the whole distance keeps alongside the River Beltcherag, a stream of great depth, and traversed by three excellent stone bridges. The length of the defile is nine miles. The road is kept clear of stones, and at various places dykes are erected, to protect it from inundations. The people evidently take immense pains to keep the highway in proper order.

At the village of Deretche is stationed a picket of eight infantrymen, to keep the road clear of robbers. Here we encountered fifteen troopers and two infantrymen in red uniform, sent to meet us by the Governor of Maimene, Djernel (General) Mahomet Akber Khan, nephew of the Lueenaib.

The officer in charge of the party saluted me in the name of the Governor, and stated that accommodation for the night had been prepared for me at Kata Kala, and that arrangements were being made for my entering Maimene on the morrow.

To this I replied that I had already made up my mind to pass the night at Maimene, and should ride on thither with my escort.

The officer then said that tents had been sent to Kata Kala for myself and followers, besides a travelling kitchen, and that a dinner was already awaiting me there.

I replied that I was very much obliged to the Governor for his kindness, but the stage from Beltcherag to Kata Kala was only fifteen miles long, and if I every day performed such insignificant rides as that, I should not reach Herat till Doomsday. I begged him to excuse me for disturbing his arrangements; but I should certainly pass the night at Maimene.

Seeing my inflexibility, the officer wrote off a report to Mahomet Akber Khan, and then we set out afresh for Kata Kala, distant four miles from Deretche. On our arrival there, the officer offered me tea, and something to eat. I replied

that I was not accustomed to eat while on the march. He then asked permission for himself to have a cup of tea and a "smoke." I assented, but, at the same time, declared that I should not stay at Kata Kala more than half-an-hour.

An hour passed. I observed to the officer that time was up, and that we must now be on the move.

The officer begged me to wait a little longer. His men had gone to Kata Kala (the village itself was situated on the opposite side of the road, about three quarters of a mile from where we had halted), and had not yet returned with tea and victuals. I waited another half-hour; and then, there being no signs of the soldiers returning, I gave orders for the rest of the escort to saddle and follow me. On the road we met the other troopers, and the officer and his men ate their dinner as best they could in the saddle.

While we were riding along, I noticed that the two infantrymen belonging to the escort appeared very tired, and suggested to the officer that they should be allowed to make use of two of the led horses. The latter replied proudly that the infantrymen would never allow themselves to be left behind by the cavalry.

Not wishing that anybody should suffer on my

account—we had still fifteen miles to go—I turned to the men, and offered them direct my led horse and one of my pack animals.

The road ran the whole distance along the bank of the river. The locality was hilly, but offered no obstacle to our progress. At the twenty-sixth mile was a bridge across the river, the fourth we had seen since leaving Beltcherag. Here the road leaves the river bank, and, turning sharply to the west, ascends the mountain.

On reaching the bridge, the officer begged me to wait there until an answer to his report arrived from Maimene. I replied that I had no intention of stopping on the road, and that no matter what the answer of the Governor might be, I should sleep in Maimene that night.

The ascent to the mountain was steep and difficult. We had to ascend a rocky spur, and then descend again; a ride of about two miles and a half. Afterwards we proceeded lower still, until we came to the spacious dale of Maimene, dotted with numerous villages and farmhouses.

Just as we reached level ground, a horseman rode up to our party from Maimene, with an order from the Governor for me to stop at the

first village, and wait there awhile, so as to enter the city after dark.

The officer read me the order. I laughed. "Tell the Governor," I said, "that there was some sense in stopping at Kata Kala, halfway on the road; but to halt at a village within sight of the city itself is a piece of ridiculous nonsense."

"Yes, but they are not yet ready at Maimene to receive you," urged the officer. "Mahomet Akber Khan wishes to line the road with troops."

I touched my horse with my whip, and rode on. The courier wheeled round, and dashed off full speed back to the town.

The broad beaten road leads straight to the town, along the right bank of the river. The officer wished me to turn to the left and ride across the fields, where there was no road, and where the ground was cut up by irrigation canals and the river itself.

"What do you mean by it?" I demanded. "Why can't we keep straight on? The city gate there is right in front of us."

"Yes, but the straight road leads direct to the Bazaar, and the Governor does not want you to pass through it on your way to your quarters."

My rising anger subsided. Fording the river, we rode across the country until we came to a Mazar, about a mile from Maimene. Here the officer again reiterated his request that I should stay at the Mazar until nightfall.

This was too much for me. I lost all command over my temper. Boiling with rage, I glared at the Afghan and said, "If you put that request to me again, beware of the consequences. I shall not hold myself answerable for my actions."

In the end we reached the city wall, and turning to the left, rode round the whole of the southern side of the city, and then—and then only—came to a gate leading into Maimene.

CHAPTER VIII.

MAIMENE.

Description of the city—Its siege by the Afghans—Cause of the protracted investment—The appearance of the Afghan troops at Maimene—Major Goolam Mahomet takes his departure—The Governor of Maimene refuses to see me—March routes to Herat—The Zmaini Regiment—Adjutant Hamid Khan—Aspect of the country beyond Maimene—The rumour that Russia had purchased Herat—Mustapha Khan becomes Mustapha Bey—The valley of the River Almar—Brutality of the Afghans towards the Uzbek villagers—A dinner obtained by bloodshed—The River Kaisar—Ravages of the Turcomans—A description of Tcharshambe—A holy man-stealer—My refusal to receive him.

MAIMENE is surrounded by a wall six yards thick, and provided with a moat. The citadel is situated inside the city, and is erected on an artificial eminence. Its walls are twenty-four feet high. A huge tower, covered with blue glaze, serves as the *reduite* of the citadel. At one time, the town possessed 25,000 inhabitants; to-day, it lies in ruins, and hardly claims one-tenth its former population.*

* For a most graphic and interesting account of Maimene, previous to its subjugation by the Afghans, the reader should turn to Vambéry's "Travels in Central Asia."—C. M.

According to the account of Meer Ali Khan, the Afghans went to work seriously in their war with Meer Hussein, the Khan of Maimene. They despatched against the city 10,000 troops and 20 cannon. In order to transport the artillery thither from Saripool, a vast amount of labour was spent in levelling the road. The army marched in two columns; one from Mazar-e-Shereef, and the other from Herat. The latter was a small one, consisting only of a battalion of infantry and a regiment of cavalry. On their arrival, the city was enclosed on all sides, and the siege commenced. For six months the Afghans maintained the attack; and then, succeeding in effecting a breach in the wall, they carried the city by storm, and put 18,000 of the defenders to the sword. Afterwards the place was sacked, and laid in ruins.

Meer Hussein, the Khan of Maimene, defended himself gallantly in the citadel, but being in the end taken prisoner, was carried away to Cabul. The Afghans, by their excesses, excited such terror among the people, that those of the defenders of Maimene who managed to effect their escape during the siege, have never returned to the Khanate.

To my question, why the Afghans remained so long under the walls of Maimene, Meer Ali Khan replied that no order had been received from the Ameer to take the place. Directly the order arrived from Shere Ali, the city was at once captured.

This explanation is unsatisfactory. In all probability the Commander-in-Chief of the Afghan forces, Kadeer Khan, did not care to risk an assault until reinforcements arrived from Cabul to protect his communications, which, on account of passing through the recently conquered Khanates of Sheebeer Khan and Saripool, were in a somewhat dangerous condition.

I was conducted to excellent lodgings, not far from the citadel. Immediately after my arrival, the Governor sent me some tea, sugar, and grapes, and a pound of stearine candles. A few minutes later my guard was replaced by fresh troops from the garrison of Maimene. These comprised cavalry and infantry, the latter being dressed in *arkhalooks* * and turbans. A greater set of guys than the infantrymen it would have been difficult to have found in any European pantomime. Their uniforms were made up of such a medley of

* A short surtout worn by Circassians.—C. M.

colours and shapes, and sat upon them so badly, that it was impossible not to laugh at them.

Some of the men wore blue uniforms, with yellow trimmings; others, blue, with red or raspberry-coloured collars and cuffs; here and there were men with Hungarian hussar jackets; while not a few were decked out conspicuously in black, with white cuffs, white collars, white buttons, and white facings. All of them wore a sort of helmet, not of felt, as at Mazar-e-Shereef, but of a striped cotton material, with a small bunch of feathers on the top. These helmets were so low, and the peak came down so close over the eyes, that they were more worthy of being called *tubetaikas* * than helmets. The uniforms were not of cloth, but were made of some sort of cotton material, wadded. All the infantrymen wore shoes.†

The infantry part of the guard had charge of the gate of the house; the cavalry kept watch over my lodgings.

The same day Major Goolam Mahomet took

* A tubetaika is a small, flat cap, worn by the Bashkeers in East Russia.—C. M.

† The cavalry had high boots, made of unvarnished leather, straight all the way up, i. e., without any folds whatever from the instep to the knee.

leave of me, receiving a document similar to that which I had given Adjutant Ahmed Ali Addijan at Salmazar. The Major told me that he meant to return home not across the mountains, but by another route, *viâ* Khairabad.

In order to rest my horses, I decided to remain a day at Maimene.

The following morning, November 7, I sent a message to the Governor, expressing my desire to see him; but received a reply that, without the sanction of the Lueenaib, he could not possibly take upon himself to make my acquaintance.

My object in wishing to see him was to discuss the march-route from Maimene to Herat. In consequence of his refusal, I despatched him a message to the effect that I should be glad if he would send me somebody who had been to Herat, that I might discuss the matter with him. Mahomet Akber Khan thereupon sent me three Heratee Afghans.

I should observe, that in reaching Maimene I had already entered the *rayon* of Turcoman forays, and that the most convenient road to Herat, *viâ* the valley of the River Kaisar, falling into the Moorgab, was extremely open to the Alaman (Turcoman raid). It is on this account

that caravans usually avoid this route, and prefer to traverse the wilder, but less dangerous road leading across the mountains to Herat. The caravan route to Herat runs through the villages of Kaisar, Khadjekand, Kalai-Naoo, and Kooroon. The individuals sent to my lodgings by Mahomet Akber Khan advised me to follow this route.

In the evening, the Dafadar of the escort appointed to accompany me to the River Moorgab came to receive orders for the morrow. I told him that I should leave at daybreak, and halt for the night at Kaisar. The Dafadar began talking about the stage to Kaisar consisting of two marches, and suggested a night halt at Almar, but I showed him the door.

On the 8th of November, early in the morning, the cavalry escort, consisting of a *sotnia* of the Zmaini Regiment, rode up to my residence. Formerly this regiment bore the title of the "Regiment of the 18th River," but received its present designation as a reward for its excellent conduct in connection with the recapture of 500 prisoners, who had been seized by the Turcomans in the environs of Maimene. The regiment was lying at Mazar-e-Shereef when the news arrived of the Alaman. The men immediately started off for

Maimene, and arrived there after forty-eight hours' ride. Two days later they came up with the Turcomans, killed a large number of them, drove the rest away, and set free the Maimene prisoners. My escort was selected specially from the Zmaini Regiment, because the district through which we had to pass was a very dangerous one, and the Governor wished to guard me from any attempt on the part of the Turcomans to seize my person.

Attached to the squadron was Adjutant Hamid Khan, a Sayid by descent, and a man wholly unlike the Afghans in features. His manners were exceedingly elegant, and his clothes sat upon him with remarkable ease. I could not help observing to him that he had not the appearance of an Afghan; upon which he proudly replied, "I am an Arab." As a descendant of Mahomet, everybody paid him great honour, and even the officers kissed his fingers.

The squadron brought with it the regimental standard, which among the Afghans possesses the same importance as with ourselves—that is, that everybody must defend it unto death. Hamid Khan, in informing me of this circumstance, added that I was now their standard, and that if any harm happened to me, not one of the

escort would dare to return home, since they would all of them assuredly be put to death, and might, therefore, just as well die in my defence as return to Maimene to be executed.

On leaving Maimene, we were joined by a functionary appointed to accompany us as far as Herat. This was the Koorbashi of Maimene, Abdoollah by name. He was appointed to audit the expenses of the escort; the accounts of Meer Ali Khan having possibly been regarded by the Governor as excessive.

The road, for two miles after leaving the city, ran across the perfectly level bottom of the valley, and then began to ascend the mountains. Here we found the country very troublesome, on account of its extremely hilly character, and the frequency of hollows. The road, besides, was extremely narrow. I rode the whole time alongside Hamid Khan. My horse's pace was a rapid amble. This attracted Hamid's attention, and after awhile he said, "Do you always ride like that?"

"Sometimes I do," I replied; "but more often at a foot pace."

"I was told," he continued, "that you always galloped, and that on the road it was difficult to keep up with you."

"Had that been so," I answered, "my horse would have been out of this world long ago. He is the same that I started from Samarcand with, and I entertain hopes that he will carry me the rest of the way to the Caspian."

Afterwards it transpired that the legend about my rapid pace had been set on foot by Major Goolam Mahomet. Why, I do not know.

Hamid Khan mentioned during our ride that the belief was everywhere prevalent that the Russian Government had purchased Herat, and that I was proceeding thither to inspect the town, and report whether it was worth the money demanded for it, and to choose the best road for the advance of the Russian troops. Was this true? he asked.

"Certainly not," I replied. "Where do people ever buy a thing, and pay for it, and then send to see whether it is worth the money? I am a mere traveller. Besides, we know the road to Herat already. Here is a map of Afghanistan, with the road marked from Tashkent to Herat."

How the rumour got about, it is difficult to say; but the fact remains that, in 1878, it was believed all over Asia that we had bought Herat, and I found that the report had preceded me

wherever I went. Even at Sharood, in Persia, I was asked by a number of Russian Armenians whether the report was true or not, since they wished to open agencies at Herat.

During the change of escort at Maimene, the soldiers appointed to accompany me to Herat had greatly interested themselves respecting my military position, enquiring where I had served, whether I belonged to the Russian infantry or the cavalry (*paltan* or *reesala*), and how many men served under me. My man Mustapha, to give greater importance to myself—and to himself also—had replied to the latter query with a high figure, which all the way along the road he kept increasing. By the time I reached Herat it was commonly believed that I was a commander of ten thousand men; and Mustapha had increased so much in the estimation of the Afghans that they no longer called him Mustapha Khan, but Mustapha Bey.

After riding sixteen miles we came to the village of Almar, consisting of sixty houses scattered along both sides of the river of the same name. We found quartered there a squadron of the Zmaini Regiment, to protect the inhabitants from the attacks of Turcomans, the necessity for

which was shown by the numerous graves in the burying-ground, surmounted with rags attached to poles—silent testimony that the persons interred below had fallen in conflict with the enemy.

The village is situated at the side of the high-road. The bazaar flanks the road, and twice a week the people assemble there from the surrounding district. The 8th of November was not a market day, so that only two or three of the booths were open. None the less, however, in passing by the bazaar, Hamid Khan made the troopers form a chain around me, and draw their swords.

Along the valley of the River Almar we rode for two miles, and then again took to the hills. The road was of the same character as that between Maimene and Almar—innumerable ascents and descents—only steeper than before. The ground was clayey, and the track narrow. At every five miles we passed an infantry picket, consisting of from six to ten men located alongside the highway, to protect travellers from the attacks of roving Turcomans. They hardly accomplish their object.

Already before reaching Almar, Hamid Khan had begged me to stop there for the night,

alleging that the escort horses, long inactive at Maimene, would be knocked up by a long ride on the first day of the journey. To this I had refused to listen. When we got to within five miles of Kaisar, however, I noticed that the escort horses, which had been riding for eight hours on the stretch, presented signs of fatigue ; and not caring to object further to the request of such a pleasant fellow as Hamid Khan, turned off the road to the village of Saor, to pass the night there. As we had ridden somewhat fast, my pack horses had lagged behind, and the men, not being informed of our change of plans, proceeded direct to Kaisar, whither Hamid Khan despatched a part of the escort to protect them.

The settlement of Saor lies in a narrow valley, and is built on the steep sides of the mountain. It has the aspect of being in constant fear of Turcoman attacks. The houses are grouped in blocks, in such a manner that each block forms a whole, adapted for defence. Along the mountain side are a number of towers.

I was conducted to a lodging in the middle of the village, while the convoy pitched their tents*

* The tents of the Afghan troops are exactly the same as the transport tents used by Russian officers.

below, along the bottom of the defile. As usual, a guard was placed over the dwelling in which I passed the night.

The people of Saoor are extremely poor. Here, as at Koortchee, food had to be collected for us by handfuls. Meer Ali Khan, in making his house-to-house collection of victuals, proved himself a regular savage. Seizing the first person he met, he would demand some oil, a chicken, or some rice ; and if the unfortunate villager protested that he had nothing in his possession but bread, he would proceed to kick him and beat him. One old man he beat until he fell insensible. The soldiers, going from house to house, followed Meer Ali's example.

Before long, groans were heard proceeding from every part of the village. I myself saw soldiers, dissatisfied with the weight of their fists, using heavy cobble stone to beat the people with. In vain I begged and threatened. The sight of blood only seemed to make the Afghans more savage. At last, finding myself unable to effect anything, I retired to my room, and threw myself down to sleep ; sending word to Meer Ali Khan that I should not touch any of the food acquired by blood.

On the 9th of November we passed the night at Tcharshambe.

In order to proceed to Kaisar, lying on a stream of the same name, we had to turn back a little, and cross a mountain bridge before attaining the valley of the river. The village is situated five miles from Saor, and contains two hundred and fifty houses. The bottom of the valley in which the village is built has a gravelly soil. At Kaisar, our escort was reinforced by another squadron of the Zmaini Regiment.

For five miles beyond the village the road runs along the bottom of the valley, and then takes again to the hills, over which it passes for four or five miles. On issuing from the hills, the traveller passes through the village of Tcheetchaktoo. At the end of the twenty-fourth mile is Tcharshambe.

Not far from Tcharshambe we were met by a squadron of the Zmaini Regiment, quartered in that village, who accompanied us to the place of the night halt. In this manner, our escort developed to three squadrons, with 480 horses, including therein the *yabas*, and the spare pack animals.

On leaving Tcheetchaktoo we entered a country

where, at every step, may be seen traces of Turcoman forays—ruined villages; fields with fertile soil thrown out of cultivation; irrigation canals full of water, but used by no one; and the banks of the River Kaisar clogged with reeds, and affording lairs for savage animals. On every side may be seen towers, into which the people retire the moment a Turcoman is seen. No matter how close a field may be to a village—even if the distance be only twenty steps—it is defended by a tower. The roads to the fields afar off are dotted all the way with towers, built fifty or a hundred yards from each other, and no villager dares to go outside his house unless fully equipped with defensive weapons. The village of Tcharshambe is the last inhabited point along the River Kaisar. There was a time when the entire valley was densely populated.

Tcharshambe comprises four hundred houses. The ruin effected by the Turcomans has reduced this formerly wealthy locality to such extremities, that the people could not furnish our four hundred and eighty horses with barley for six days, and the soldiers had, in consequence, to go back and get some.

I was led to my quarters in the principal house

in the place, belonging to an Eeshan, or holy person. Eeshans and dervishes, as individuals having close relation with God, are never meddled with by the Turcomans, since there are instances on record among the nomads of such interference having been punished by the failure of subsequent Alamans. The Eeshan of Tcharshambe is accredited with taking advantage of his privileged position to carry on a profitable little business on his own account. It is said that he is accustomed to kidnap the children of his neighbours, or of the inhabitants of villages in the vicinity, and sell them to the Turcomans. When the parents or friends of the little captives seek to effect their ransom, the Eeshan acts as intermediary, and, in that capacity, a neat little percentage passes into his pocket to swell his original plunder. The holy man manages the kidnapping process with such skill, that no direct evidence of guilt has ever yet been brought home to him, although everybody regards him as a professional man-stealer. On my arrival at Tcharshambe he waited upon me with a present of wheaten cakes and melons ; but, having already been informed of his character, I refused to accept his offering, and begged him to leave my presence.

CHAPTER IX.

MERV AND THE TEKKE TURCOMANS.

Merv as it used to be—Its capture and destruction by the Bokharans—Turcoman forays—One beneficial result of the capture of Khiva—An estimate of Turcoman courage—Preparing for the Alaman—Attacks on caravans—Sufferings of the captives—Fate of the prisoners—The long captivity of Gunner Keedaeff—Wonderful fertility of the oasis of Merv—Reconstruction of the broken dam—How the power of the Tekkes might easily be destroyed—My desire to go to Merv—Napier—Terrible condition of the region ravaged by the Tekke Turcomans—Departure from Tcharshambe—Hamid Khan refuses to take the easiest road to Herat.

TCHARSHAMBE is the extreme inhabited point as far as the Moorgab, and higher up that river as far as the district of Feeroozkoh. The road running through Tcharshambe, and along the Moorgab, was once regularly visited by caravans proceeding to Herat. It is only in comparatively recent times—that is to say, at the end of the last century—that it became entirely defenceless, and, in consequence, grew to be avoided by the traders of Central Asia.

At the period referred to, the Persians had not yet unlearned the art of governing by the sword, as

is the case to-day. They held with a firm grasp both Merv and Serakhs, and kept under restraint the Turcoman hordes in their immediate vicinity. The Tekkes, to-day the possessors of the desert, and part owners of many parts of Khorassan, then dwelt along the plain of Akhal, under the shadow of the Kopet Dagh.

In 1784 the Emir of Bokhara, Maasoom, declared war against the Sheeite State of Persia, and advanced against Merv, the defender of which was Bairam Ali Khan. In consequence of the difficulties in which Persia was then involved, no assistance could be despatched to the menaced city, and, notwithstanding the heroic defence of the Governor and his troops, Merv had to capitulate to the Bokharans. The victorious Emir caused all the inhabitants to be carried away slaves to Bokhara, and, in order to prevent Merv recovering its ascendancy, he entirely destroyed the ancient dam, which had kept back the river from flowing on to the desert, and had enabled the water to be dispersed through irrigation canals over all the country. Since then, Merv has dwindled down to an insignificant, isolated oasis.

In 1790 the Sarikis took possession of the

ruined city, and in 1834, they were ousted by the Tekkes, who, since then, have dwelt among the ancient remains of Persian civilisation, and have exercised terror over the people of the adjoining territories of Persia, Afghan Turkestan, and the province of Herat. These robbers have a proverb among themselves that, "if an enemy falls upon the *kibitka* of thy father, join him and rob together."

The forays of the Tekkes extend to such a frightful distance from Merv—they often penetrate, for instance, to Nimbelook, five hundred miles away—and their raids have acquired for the nomads such renown, that every exploit of the Turcomans, no matter what the tribe may be, is laid at their door. Possessing excellent horses, and able to endure any amount of fatigue, they easily undertake Alamans covering distances of four or five hundred miles. Formerly, before the Khivan Expedition of 1873, they used to go in bands of a thousand men, and even sacked and ruined towns and villages. On this account, all the settlements in the provinces of Herat and Khorassan are surrounded by high walls, with heavy gates barricaded by huge stones at nightfall. The unfortunate march to Merv of 20,000 Persians, under

Khamza Meerza Eshmedeetdowle, in 1861, when 3,000 Tekkes captured nearly the whole of the army, and offered for sale afterwards prisoners at the rate of three toomans (£1) a head, had a conspicuous effect in developing the belief in the unconquerability of the Tekkes. The year 1871, remarkable for the terrible famine that raged throughout Persia, gave a second impulse to the importance of the tribe. The Persians in Khorassan were so weakened by want of food that they offered the Tekkes no resistance whatever. A man, for many years a prisoner among the Tekkes, told me that the poorer nomads used to ride on donkeys to Serakhs, armed only with cudgels, and drive back the villagers in droves to slavery at Merv. He himself was captured in this manner during one of the Alamans.

The march to Khiva, and its results—the suppression of slavery in Khiva and Bokhara—struck a heavy blow at the ascendancy of the Tekkes. It became useless for them to steal the Persians for slaves, since they had no market for the disposal of them. For two years after the fall of Khiva the Alamans entirely ceased; and although they recommenced again in 1876,

they have never yet reached the proportions they attained before the closing of the slave markets.

The Turcomans, like jackals, are frightened of daylight, and only fall upon their prey before dawn, or just before sunset. In the daytime they scarcely ever attack. They make it a rule never to engage in hostilities unless there is a good chance of success. They do not like to come to hard blows with their enemies, and if they meet with any resistance, no matter how slight, they relinquish their prey, and take to flight. On this account, they are always fastidious of attacking people possessing arms.*

Having decided upon a distant expedition, the Tekkes carefully prepare their horses for the journey. At first they ride down their fat by trotting them out every day; beginning very slowly, and gradually increasing the pace to a swift gallop. They then commence to strengthen them, giving them greasy cakes composed of barley and mutton fat. Such food is furnished them for five successive days, after which they

* This is also the opinion of Major-General Markozoff; but, at the same time, that the Tekkes are capable of performing deeds of wonderful heroism, is proved by their conduct during the storming of Dengeel Tepe by General Lomakin in 1879 or a description of which, see "The Eyewitnesses' Account of the Disastrous Russian Campaign against the Akhal Tekke Turcomans." W. H. Allen & Co., London, 1880.—C. M.

are in a condition to proceed on the longest journey at the swiftest pace. In setting out on the Alaman, the Tekkes take with them a supply of barley, and a number of cakes, made of mutton fat mixed with barley or maize. A deal of this food is left on the road, buried at various places, so as to lighten the Tekkes as they advance. On the departure of the expedition from the *aoul*, the entire population escorts them some distance, and the Moollah gives them his blessing. In traversing their own country, the Tekkes proceed slowly. Having reached the boundary, however, they change the pace of their horses into a gallop, and choose the most neglected route for their advance. The magnificent steeds on which they are mounted overcome every obstacle; no mountain, however lofty, checks their advance, and the rocks on the road fail to impede their progress. Not without reason do the Tekkes call themselves "goats," the term Tekke signifying that animal; for a goat can penetrate anywhere in a rocky country, and the Tekkes boast that they also can do the same.

Having reached the locality selected for the Alaman, the Tekkes sometimes reconnoitre their prey for several days together, and then, when

certain of success, dash, with cries of "Hurrah!" upon it from every side. If it is a caravan, they tear open the packs, and select from them the most precious articles; if a flock of sheep, they seize the foremost, slit their ears, throw the animals into the air, and let them fall on their backs out of breath; if human beings, they fasten the hands of the prisoner tightly behind him, set him on the croup of their horses, tying his legs under the animal's belly, and, finally, fasten a rope round him, and attach it to their own waist.

The plunder being secured, the Tekkes set off back to their country, travelling at a swift gallop, and stopping only for a few seconds now and again to water their horses. The latter are even fed while on the gallop, the mutton cakes being placed in a small nose-bag for that purpose. If they return home the way they came, they stop on the road to pick up the food secreted during the advance. If they are compelled to select another route, they do not get off their horses the whole time, nor yet allow their captives to do so.

Mustapha, who, as I have already said, was once a prisoner among the Tekkes, told me that,

during the five days' ride to Merv following his capture, he neither ate, nor drank, nor got off the horse once, from the moment they started; the animal proceeding at a short gallop the whole time. His Turcoman captor also neither ate, nor got off the saddle, but chewed a little baked corn from time to time. Mustapha's story was confirmed by several other Persians I met, who had been carried off as slaves to Merv or Akhal.

Only when the Tekke feels perfectly assured of the impossibility of being overtaken, does he stop at some stream or other, and give his horse some grass; releasing, at the same time, his captive from the saddle, and furnishing him with a little food. After this, the horse proceeds at a step pace.

When the Alaman nears the *aoul*, one or two of the party are sent on in front, to announce the return of the expedition. The whole population then turn out to welcome home the warriors. The women praise their valour, the Moollahs loudly thank the Almighty, and the old men rejoice that the youths are adding to the glory of the tribe.

Old people and suckling children are never

carried off captives : they are usually killed on the spot. The women are the chief prize, becoming, on their arrival at the *aoul*, the concubines of their captors ; their children being brought up in slavery. Formerly, it was customary for the Tekkes to despatch to the slave markets of Khiva and Bokhara, their offspring by the Persian women captured during their forays. Previous to 1873, it was a very uncommon thing for the Tekkes to keep their captives as slaves in Merv or Akhal. Usually they carried them off direct to the slave markets of Central Asia, and only kept one or two at home to look after their horses. In the latter case, it was customary to fetter the prisoners with chains for a year, and afterwards tie them up only at night.

At the present time, the Tekkes carry off adults in order to receive ransom for them, and children in order that they may be trained up from their infancy as slaves. To induce the captives' friends to remit the ransom the quicker, the Tekkes often torture the unfortunates who fall into their power. Thus, Dangatar, the Tekke who captured Keedaeff,* a Russian soldier, on the

* Keedaeff, a gunner belonging to the Russian garrison at Fort Petro-Alexandrovek, in the Khivan oasis, was taken prisoner in 1873, at Sardabakool, on the right bank of the Amu Daria. It is

right bank of the Amu Daria, in 1873, repeatedly applied hot embers and boiling water to the stomach of his victim, in order to induce the Russian Government to forward the money demanded for his release.

All who have visited the oasis of Merv, speak of it in terms of the warmest admiration. It is a common saying among such persons, that the moment the Russians conquer Merv, large numbers of people will migrate thither from Persia. Mustapha would be only too delighted to give up his native Gulistan, and proceed to Merv with the whole of his relations. The soil is of such rich quality, and the water of the Moorgab is so abundant,

believed that he passed himself off as an officer, as Dangatar, his captor, subsequently demanded 8,000 toomans for him. Failing to receive this from the Russian Government, Dangatar wreaked his anger on the soldier, by torturing him; and afterwards, in despair of making any profit out of him, sold him to Annageldi, the chief of the Tekke-Bakshis. In 1878, Keedaeff wrote to Bakoulin, the Russian Consul at Asterabad, begging him to ransom him from the Tekkes; but Bakoulin replied that this was impossible, since it would only incite the Turcomans to make a regular trade of kidnapping Russian subjects. He advised him to wait patiently for deliverance, and when the Russian expedition against the Akhal Tekkes neared his place of confinement, to endeavour to make his escape. Since then negotiations have been carried on from time to time, but Keedaeff still remains a captive among the Tekkes. In extenuation of the Tekkes' conduct, it should be understood that the Commandant of the Russian fort near Khiva has repeatedly hanged Merv Turcomans falling into his power, and that several Tekkes are living in exile in Vologda and other places in Northern Russia, whither they have been deported by the orders of General Lomakin.—C. M.

that a failure of the harvest at Merv is a thing unheard of. At the time of the great famine in Persia, in 1871, corn was as cheap at Merv as ever. Many of the Persian prisoners, whose ransom had been sent them by their friends in Khorassan, preferred remaining at Merv until they had heard of the success of the fresh harvest in their own country. The ancient dam, destroyed by the troops of the Bokharan Emir Maasoom, has been re-erected, and every spring the Tekkes repair it. For this work of repair 2,000 labourers are usually assigned, one labourer from every twenty-four families. The Tekkes at Merv consequently consist of 48,000 families, or, from 190,000 to 240,000 individuals of both sexes. The oasis is nine miles wide and about ninety miles long ; and so far from the desire of Maasoom to make it a desert being accomplished, the country is as fruitful as any one could possibly wish it to be. The natives call it the Shah-Djegarni, or the "Tsar of the World," on account of its wonderful fertility. Among themselves is cherished a tradition, that when Adam was driven out of Eden he went to Merv, where God first taught him to till the soil.

The Alaman provides the Tekkes with a deal

of substance. By means of the foray they obtain women, slaves, sheep, horses, gold and silver ornaments, and money. The Turcomans avariciously hoard up anything which they imagine to be of value. It is said that there are men among them, whose hoards of gold and silver loot could not be carried by half a dozen camels.

Merv is the Persian designation of the oasis; the Uzbeks call it Maoor. The dot on the map, over which is usually written "Merv," consists in reality of nothing more than two houses, a *metchet*, a school, and several cattle-enclosures, dispersed over the ground at extended intervals from each other, and surrounded by clay walls. Inside the "cattle-enclosures" * are *kibitkas*, alongside which are picketed the horses. It is quite a common thing to see the Tekkes dwelling in tattered tents, while their teeds are covered with magnificent horse-cloths.

The Turcoman and his horse are inseparable :

* These so-called "cattle-enclosures" are probably no other than *kalas*, or clay-walled forts. Grodekoff's account of Merv is very meagre, and one can only form an adequate notion of what the *aoul*, or encampment of Merv, may possibly be, by reading Arsky's excellent description of the Akhal Tekke region, in the work on the Turcoman campaign previously referred to. Grodekoff did not penetrate to the Tekke region, while Arsky traversed numerous settlements belonging to the Tekkes, and was present at the battle of Dengeel Tepe.—C. M.

take away the horse from the Tekke, and he no longer possesses the power of terrorising over his neighbour. Hence, if ever we conquer Merv, besides imposing a money contribution, we ought to take from the Tekkes all their best stallions and mares. They would then cease at once to be formidable.

The social fabric of the Tekkes is patriarchal. The elders, however, although they exert influence, possess no authority. The influence of the elders is all-powerful in the settlement of intertribal quarrels, and in forming combinations among the clans against the common enemy.

The Tekke oasis is closed against Europeans, no matter to what country they may belong: England, Russia, or any other.

During my interview with the Emir of Bokhara, I begged him to afford me his assistance to enable me to proceed to Merv. In his service was a Tekke named Kara Shaitan, occupying the post of Datkhee, or General, and having intimate relations with his fellow-countrymen at Merv. Escorted by this individual, I thought I might safely visit the ruined city on the Moorgab.

Moozaffar Eddin, however, assured me that this belief was illusory. He could take upon

himself, he said, to guarantee my safety as far as the boundary of the Turcoman tribes acknowledging his suzerainty, but beyond that point his responsibility would have to cease, and he could see no other prospect before me, on reaching Merv, than seizure and imprisonment in chains.

The English officer Napier only decided to go to Merv, in the event of the Tekkes giving hostages to the Persian Government for his safety. The hostages the Tekkes would not give, and Napier said with chagrin, that "the only person who could pass through Merv was a "White Cap," *i.e.*, a Russian officer. This fretful speech was uttered in the beginning of 1878, but, up to the present moment, no White Cap has yet passed through the Tekke capital.

The whole of the recollections of the people inhabiting the region liable to Tekke forays, gather round the irruptions of the nomads. It is a regular thing for them to date occurrences from such and such a foray. In Persia, and in a portion of the province of Herat, special prayers are offered up imploring the intervention of the Almighty against the Alaman. The people seem to have only one object in

life—to secure themselves and their property from the raiders. The inhabitants of many localities I visited, begged me to thank the White Tsar for freeing them from slavery in Khiva, and ask him when the destruction of the Tekke scourge would be accomplished. Neither the Ameer of the Afghans, nor the Shah of the Persians, in any way concerns himself about his people's sufferings.

As evidences of the truthfulness of what they told me, the people pointed to the burying-grounds, and begged me to notice how few were the graves unsurmounted by a tufted stick—the sign of death by the sword. They pointed to their villages, half the houses of which lay in ruins. They pointed to the immense tracts of fertile country round about them, thrown out of cultivation because no one could till the soil without fear of being suddenly seized, and hurried off into slavery. They pointed to the *kerezee*, or underground canals, by the aid of which they irrigated their fields; and said that every yard of water in them was dyed with the blood of their countrymen, or was a silent witness of peasants carried away prisoners by the Tekkes. When the people learnt that I myself had taken part in the Khivan

campaign, their demonstrations of feeling towards me knew no bounds.

Notwithstanding that our escort consisted of the substantial force of 300 armed troops, Adjutant Hamid Khan decided not to conduct me along the valley of the River Kaisar, for fear of encountering Turcomans, and selected another and safer route across the mountains. Such, at least, was the explanation accorded to me as the cause of our mountain journey, in preference to a ride along the valley. Possibly, the Afghan spoke the truth; but I imagine, however, that the direct road was not so very dangerous but that 300 soldiers could have given a very good account of themselves in any conflict with the nomads; not to speak of the well-known fact that the Tekkes rarely, if ever, fall on armed individuals, and, above all, on soldiers.

In all probability, the Afghans did not wish to show me a good road, and led me along a track, which, another time, I should not desire to take. Several circumstances supported this impression. Thus, we proceeded towards the mountains as if no danger whatever existed, the column covering nearly five miles of ground, and being arranged in such a manner, that a sudden

onslaught of the Tekkes against the vanguard or rear would probably have been crowned with success. Then, the road along which we marched lay very close to the valley of the Kaisar; at times, indeed, in crossing the defiles leading into it, we saw the valley only two or three miles away. Finally, for the greater part of the journey, we pushed on direct across the country without following any road, track, or path whatever. In vain I assured the Adjutant that the march of the convoy close to the Turcoman country would have a good effect upon the nomads, and that even if the enemy did attack us, the brave Zmaini horsemen would be sure to give a good account of themselves. I, myself, I said, would only be too happy to assist the Afghans, and would pursue the Turcomans wherever necessary. Besides, by following the mountain path, we openly displayed our fear to the Tekkes, who would be encouraged thereby to greater acts of boldness. To this the Adjutant had but one reply. He prayed to God, he said, that he might deposit me safe and sound at Herat, and that he might meet no Turcomans on the way. However much he might rely upon his regiment, anything might happen in a fight.

We had only just left Tcharshambe when a *tchapar*, from Herat, rode up to the convoy, and presented the Adjutant a despatch, announcing that the Turcomans had burst through beyond the Paropamisus, and requesting him to take measures to bar their retreat on their return home. The Adjutant, having read the despatch, observed to me that his present duty of conveying me to Herat was of greater importance than cutting off the retreat of the Turcomans, and added that he could not spare a single man from his regiment for any irrelevant service. Writing a short note to the Governor of Maimene, the Adjutant told the *tchapar* to betake himself thither.

CHAPTER X.

MERV NOT THE KEY OF HERAT.

The ride from Tcharshambe to Osobi Kof—Desolate aspect of the country—The ascent of the Kara Djangel—Arrival at the banks of the River Moorgab—Ruins of Bala Moorgab—Hamid Khan takes his leave—Crossing the Moorgab—Excessive care displayed by the Afghans for my safety, in traversing the ford—We encounter a band of Hazares, and the survivors of a caravan pillaged by the Tekke Turcomans on the 11th of November—Quarrel with Meer Ali Khan—The Hazares—Arrival at Kalai Naoo—Fear of the Afghans lest I should be poisoned—Dervishes—Crossing the Paropamisus—Plan of a fortified village in the valley of Herat—Merv proved not to be the key of Herat—March route from Merv to Serakhs.

FROM Tcharshambe we proceeded in a southerly direction, traversing a small mountain ridge, and arriving at the end of an hour at the *kishlak* of Osobi Kof. Here is buried a saint, of whom tradition records that, having one day witnessed an eagle preparing to swoop down upon an antelope, he arrested its flight with a single word, and compelled it to serve him until its death. The antelope, out of gratitude for its deliverance, also attached itself to the saint. In this manner, the eagle and the antelope lived

with the saint during his life, and, after death, were stuffed and placed on his tomb. The people of the village of Osobi Kof, in remembrance of this miracle, always keep a tame antelope with their flocks. I saw the animal in passing through Osobi Kof. It was tame to such a degree, that it placed its forelegs on the shoulders of the shepherd.

Tcharshambe, on the Kaisar, and Osobi Kof, in a defile of secondary magnitude, are the last two inhabited points as far as the Moorgab. Four miles from Osobi Kof, to the left of the road, are the ruins of the fortress of Takhta Khoteen. As far as this locality, the road ran along the defile, and was a regular high-road; but afterwards it turned off to the left, and proceeded across open country, traversing numerous descents and acclivities. Sometimes we encountered a path, and not far from it could see signs of irrigation canals choked up, and fertile fields abandoned. Everywhere the soil was splendid, and the ground covered with excellent grass. After ten hours' uninterrupted ride, we halted for the night alongside the marshes of the rivulet Togai Kara Djangel. The ride of November 10th was a heavy one, but

nothing compared with the one lying before us the following morning.

The defile along which flows the rivulet Togai Kara Djangel is so overgrown with reeds, that we could not find anywhere a spot large enough for the bivouac of the entire convoy; and, in consequence, had to camp in two detachments, about half a mile from each other. For our supper, food was prepared from provisions purchased at Tcharshambe.

The ride of the 11th of November was the most arduous we had yet experienced in Afghan Turkestan. For the first two miles we rode along the Togai Kara Djangel, seeing in the distance the ruins of Kala Bali, on the River Kaisar. Afterwards, turning sharply to the southwest, we rode nineteen miles across trackless country, traversing many mountain spurs, and effecting many descents. In the end, we reached a valley at the foot of the lofty ridge of Kara Djangel. Along the valley runs a stream, with a path at the side. This we followed for four miles, and then commenced the ascent of the Kara Djangel ridge. The acclivity stretches for three and a quarter miles, is very steep, and covered with stones and brushwood. The summit

of the ridge is rocky. The descent to the Moor-gab, on the other side, is so difficult, that it is impossible to accomplish it on horseback. The rocky portion of the descent extends for a mile and a half, after which the road turns to the north-west, and gradually drops, in terraces, to the river. The vanguard of the escort took ten hours to accomplish the march, and the rear-guard was two hours longer on the road. The stage was a dear one for the Afghans. Three *yaba* horses fell on the road, four refused to carry their packs, and several chargers displayed unmistakable signs of exhaustion. The Afghans, who had laughed all along at my ill-favoured Kirghiz steed, could not praise its qualities sufficiently, on arriving at the Moorgab.

We pitched our tents on the bank of the river—a broad, and full flowing stream. The banks are steep, and have a height of twenty-four feet, covered with shrubs and willows. On the right bank is a broad, level plain, on which we pitched our tents. On the left bank of the river, a high, rocky mountain ridge approaches very closely to the water's edge. Not far from our halting place was the deserted post of Bala Moorgab, from which point commences the province of Herat.

According to the arrangements of the Lueenaib, at Mazar-e-Shereef, an escort was to have been sent from Herat to Bala Moorgab to relieve the Maimene convoy. Djamadar Meer Ali Khan had been furnished with a letter addressed to the Governor-General of Herat by the Lueenaib, but had neither despatched it from Maimene, nor yet while advancing towards Bala Moorgab, in spite of the repeated solicitations of Adjutant Hamid Khan, to whom the despatch of an escort from Herat was of the utmost importance, since it would relieve him of the troublesome and responsible duty of protecting my person. In this manner, the troopers of the Zmaini Regiment were compelled to proceed with me as far as Herat. As, however, the road beyond Bala Moorgab was not so dangerous as the road from Maimene leading to it—the Tekkes not conducting their Alamans across the territory of the Hazares and Djemshidis, in order not to give them offence—the Adjutant thought it possible to reduce my convoy to forty men; placing it under the command of a Djamadar. The remaining two and a half squadrons of cavalry he divided into two detachments; one, consisting of a squadron, remaining on the bank of the Moorgab twenty-

four hours, until I had reached the country of the Hazares, and the other, comprising one and a half squadrons, proceeding across the mountains to cut off the Tekke Alaman, respecting the movements of which the Adjutant had received tidings while marching from Tcharshambe.

The ride of the 12th of November was only a short one, and, in consequence, we rose rather late. Although only forty men were designated for my escort to Herat, I found, all the same, the whole of the three squadrons drawn up, in full dress, to accompany me. The Adjutant, it seemed, wished to escort me a part of the way with full military honours. We rode off. The Sotnias, taking advantage of the broad, level ground, opened out their ranks. Having marched in this manner about a mile, the Adjutant said that he must now take leave of me. I rode along the face of the squadrons, thanking the officers and men, and shook hands warmly with Hamid Khan, the only personage capable of comporting himself with dignity I encountered in Afghanistan.

One of the squadrons was left behind, to escort me to the ferry of the Moorgab; strict orders being given them not to return until they had

seen me safely landed on the other side of the stream.

For the first mile and a half, the road ran across a level country. Afterwards it traversed several hills, and entered a narrow, rocky defile, a mile and a half long. Just before issuing from this defile, we passed on both sides of us the ruined fortifications of Bala Moorgab, consisting of walls and towers perched 300 feet above the road. The fortifications were held by Afghan troops all the time it served as the boundary point with the Khanate of Maimene. After the conquest of Maimene, the retention of a garrison at Bala Moorgab was considered superfluous, and the place was consequently abandoned.

On quitting Bala Moorgab, we turned sharply to the south, and entered the broad flat valley of the river; having, on the right bank, high rocky precipices, and on the left, low hills with soft outlines. The valley is about two miles wide, and is covered to the height of the waist with reeds and grass.

Our road being one very rarely traversed by travellers, the reeds and the grass had gained upon the track; and it was with the utmost

difficulty that we forced our way through the tangled vegetation. The River Moorgab flows along a single channel, closer than otherwise to the left hand side of the valley. The width of the river, where we crossed it, was about seventy yards.

In spite of the lateness of the season, and the complete absence of snow or rain during the whole of the autumn, I was assured that the river could only be crossed at a certain well-known ford, where the water reached above the saddle girth. The term Moorgab means locally a "river," just the same as Daria in Central Asia. In crossing the river, the Afghans displayed such enormous solicitude for my safety, that it would indeed have been a wonder if anything had happened to me. Besides placing a line of troopers athwart the stream, the Djamadar caused four soldiers to ride at the side of me, while two others and himself led the way. When we were all safely across the Moorgab, the squadron bivouacked on the side we had just left, and the escort and myself proceeded on our journey.

At first we rode along a stream falling into the Moorgab, and flowing through the broad valley we had entered after quitting Bala Moorgab.

Afterwards commenced a rocky defile, covered to such a degree with reeds, that we experienced the utmost difficulty in forcing our way through it. Several times the path crossed and recrossed the stream, the bed of which was strewn with masses of rock and stones. We encountered great difficulty in crossing from bank to bank, and even a certain amount of danger, since it was an easy matter for the 'horses to injure themselves. The defile was very narrow; from forty to eighty yards in width. While riding through this defile we met thirty Hazares, hastening to occupy several mountain passes, which, it was believed, would be traversed by the Tekke raiding party, whose operations had been notified to Hamid Khan at Tcharshambe.

At the end of the ninth mile, we crossed over to the left bank of the stream, and proceeded alongside it for six miles, to a point where another stream joined it. Here we turned shortly to the west, and entered a spacious valley, which, at the end of four or five miles, brought us to a broad glade, enclosed by hills. Many of the fields in the glade belonged to the inhabitants of the village of Darabaum.

While riding across the glade we met six

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men, who had formed part of the caravan proceeding from Maimene to Herat, pillaged by the Tekkes on the 11th of November. They told us that the Turcomans lost three of their number during the attack, but managed to carry off thirty men belonging to the caravan, besides killing five persons and plundering all the merchandise.

Leaving the glâde behind us, we proceeded in a southerly direction, and, at the end of a mile and a half, arrived at the village of Darabaum. The inhabitants are Feeroozkis, of Persian extraction. Only five of them possess houses; the rest dwelling in tents. Their poverty is appalling.

The ride of the 12th of November was twenty-one miles long. The road was exceedingly difficult.

Meer Ali Khan again distinguished himself at Darabaum by his cruelty towards the villagers. He wanted some garlies, but the people not only had never heard the word *seer* (garlic) before, but also failed to understand what Meer Ali Khan meant. I had already left off interfering with him; but when he returned to the bivouac, I could not help observing that not a day passed without

the ill-treatment of somebody or other, by himself and his troops.

"I will throw up my appointment and return to Mazar-e-Shereef," he replied, angrily.

"Be off and do it, then," I retorted. "Do you think that I cannot do without you? Be off with you. What! you won't go? Why did you say you would, then? I am sorry now that I did not report you, when you acted so badly at Zainal Obedin Baimar."

We started again on our journey the next morning. The road at first crossed a mountain pass, not particularly high, but very steep: the ground was soft, and the path extremely narrow. Afterwards we rode two miles along a valley enclosed by hills, and then traversed another pass. Beyond this was a second valley, and afterwards three passes. Finally, at the end of the eleventh mile, we issued upon the broad glade of Sandjatak Bala, where we found several Hazare settlements, surrounded by fields. From this locality we rode on for two miles, through a narrow valley, to a second glade, called Sandjatak Poen. Here, also, are a number of Hazare settlements and fields. Beyond Sandjatak Poen the road is level, and

in good condition ; it proceeds along an elevated plain, surrounded by low mountains.

At Sandjatak Poen we found not less than a thousand Hazare horsemen, who had come with their Khan and their tribal banner to meet us. The Hazares are amongrel tribe, and in the last century, to the number of a thousand families, were deported from Turkestan to their present settlements.* Their designation they derive from the word "Hazare," meaning "a thousand." Among themselves they speak Persian. Most of them are tall, and well built, and have a handsome and manly appearance. The tribe acknowledges the suzerainty of Cabul, but pays taxes to its own Khan, and enjoys freedom of tribal administration. In the event of war, the tribe is bound to furnish a certain number of horsemen to the Ameer's army. In 1878, the Khan of the Hazares, Mahmood, was living at Cabul as a hostage ; his son, in his absence, ruling over the tribe. The Hazares collectively exceed 4,000 families. They possess a splendid breed of horses, scarcely inferior to the Tekke, and own numerous herds of cattle. Husbandry

* These Hazares must not be confused with the Hazaros living along the Bamian road. The latter are designated by the Afghans, Hazare-Barbars.

occupies a deal of their attention, and many devote themselves to the collection of pistachio nuts. They appear to be a very contented race. The horsemen who came to meet me wore, all of them, new Khalats, and carried muskets, with props attached, across their shoulders. Their head-gear consisted of sheepskin caps, such as are worn by the Turcomans.

After the customary salutations, we rode on to Kalai Nao, the capital of the Hazare tribe. Kalai Nao is distant twenty-eight miles from Darabaum, and contains a bazaar and a number of clay dwellings. Most of the people, however, dwell in tents. The place is protected by two forts: a new one, and another of ancient construction. Both were erected as a defence against the Tekkes, with whom the Hazares wage incessant war. It is not an uncommon thing for the Hazares to raid as far even as Merv, carrying off into captivity the Tekkes themselves, and exchanging them afterwards for prisoners of their own tribe. They also improve their breed of horses by seizing, from time to time, the steeds of the Tekke Turcomans.

On our arrival at Kalai Nao, the people pitched, for myself and the escort, a number of

excellent tents, with rugs inside. The hospitality we enjoyed at the capital was due entirely to the people themselves.

The following day, November 14th, the Khan gave orders for two hundred armed horsemen to accompany me. Having rode a mile and a half, we entered a forest of pistachio trees. At first we traversed hilly ground, then a level valley, and afterwards climbed three acclivities, one of which was very stony. Finally, we entered, at the twenty-sixth mile, a spacious valley. During the whole of the distance, and for eight miles further on, not a drop of water was to be had. Here and there along the road were seen reservoirs, for catching water in the spring. The pasturage is splendid. At the end of thirty-four miles is a small stream of brackish water. After this there is another ascent, very steep, and then a descent to the basin of the River Kooshk. Several settlements, bearing the common designation of Kooshk, stretch for four miles along both sides of the valley, which is traversed by the River Kooshk, and one or two affluents. The valley is about three miles wide. The bottom is covered with gravel.

When about eight miles from Kooshk, I was

met by nearly a thousand horsemen, headed by their Khan and tribal banner. They belonged to the locality, and were members of the Djemshidi tribe, which is of Persian origin, and numbers 5,000 families. Their relations with the Ameer are identical with those of the Hazares. Eebadoollah, the Khan of the Djemshidis, lives as a hostage at Cabul, where also dwells his eldest son, General Meer Aleem. The tribe, in their absence, is governed by the youngest son of Eebadoollah, Aminoola Khan. The Djemshidis possess magnificent horses; employ their energies in cattle rearing and agriculture; and, like their neighbours the Hazares, wage incessant war against the Tekkes.

At Kooshk we found pitched for us a tent with double sides, and were entertained by Aminoola Khan with a dinner dressed and served up in the Persian manner. The Koorbashi Abdoollah, who had joined the party at Maimene in the capacity of spy, followed the precedent of the preceding evening at Kalai Naoo, by making the cooks who had prepared the dinner partake of the dishes before they were handed to me. Abdoollah was frightened that somebody might attempt to poison me.

During the night there was a sharp frost.

The following morning, a large crowd assembled early round my tent to witness my departure. Among them were eight Dervishes, who had come to receive offerings. Although the frost was very severe, the only covering worn by these fanatics was a badger skin, thrown over their shoulders. The Dervishes posted themselves at the door of the tent, and on my issuing from it cried out in a chorus, "Ya—Khoo!" ("Oh—He," equivalent to "Oh Lord!") I gave them a trifle apiece, and this produced such a good impression on the people, that they long and loudly shouted their good wishes after me for a safe journey.

I was accompanied beyond Kooshk by one hundred armed Djemshidis. A mile and a half from the settlement, we crossed a mountain spur, and thence saw in front of us the Paropamisus range. Before long the ascent commenced, and we rode five miles before reaching the summit. At the outset the rise was gradual, and the ground soft; but, towards the top of the range, the acclivity became very steep, and the surface rocky. We crossed the range by the Khazret-e-Baba Pass, which derives

its designation from a Mazar, situated about two miles from that part of the mountain-crossing where the rocky ascent begins. The pass is covered with snow from the middle of December to the middle of April; but communication is maintained across the range the whole of the winter. The people only avoid the pass when the clouds gather around the top, which signifies that a snow storm is raging on the summit.

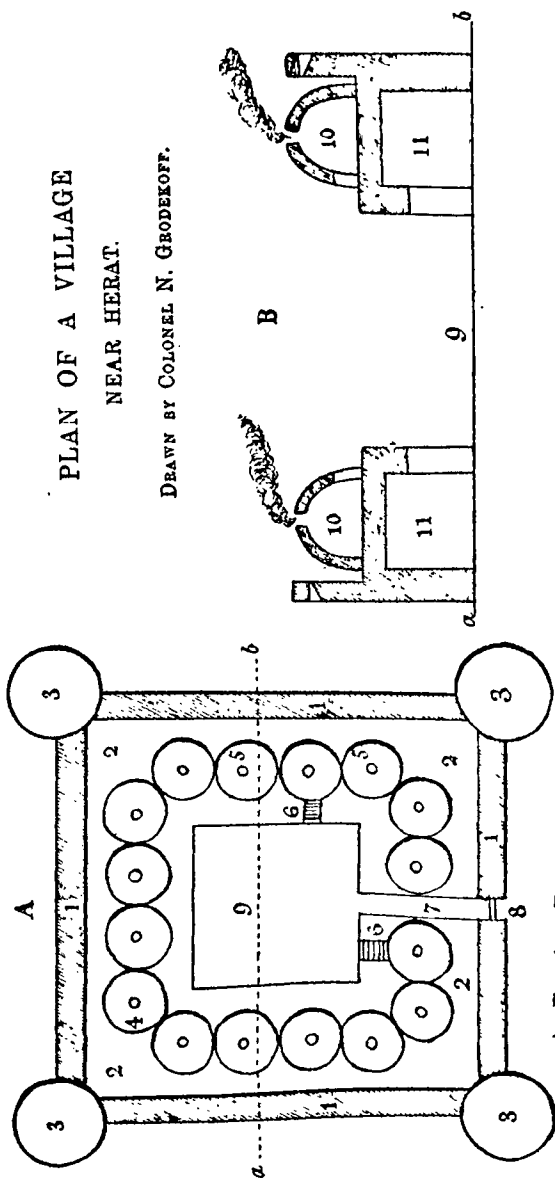
When I crossed the Paropamisus, there was not a bit of snow to be seen; the first fall not being expected for another fortnight. Both the summit of the range, and the descent from it, we found to be extremely rocky. The descent is steep, and extremely difficult. The path runs alongside the verge of a deep rocky precipice, at the foot of which flows a small stream.

We traversed ravines twice during our ride across the range; once at the nineteenth mile, and again four miles further on. The ride across both was extremely difficult. At the eighth mile from the summit of the pass commences a defile, the outlet of which exists at the end of the twenty-fifth mile. On quitting this we entered a broad valley, about five miles

PLAN OF A VILLAGE

NEAR HERAT.

DRAWN BY COLONEL N. GRODEKOFF.



A.—Plan of the Village of Sheermaa. B.—Profile along the line a b. 1.—Outer Wall. 2.—Roof of the Lower Storey, on which are placed a number of cupola-shaped Dwellings. 3.—Towers. 4.—Cupola-shaped Dwellings. 5.—Outlets for the Smoke. 6.—Staircase. 7.—Entry to the Village. 8.—Gate. 9.—General View of Sheermaa. 10.—A Dwelling. 11.—Lower Storey for the Cattle.

wide. The valley was perfectly level, and here and there contained cultivated fields, watered by underground canals. At the thirtieth mile we reached the village of Sheermas, the people of which are of Persian origin.

The village is liable to the attacks of Turcomans, and is constructed in such an original manner, that I cannot refrain from giving a sketch of it.

It is surrounded by a wall, with a tower at each corner. Along the walls are built a number of large two-story structures; the lower portion affording shelter to the cattle, and the upper serving as habitations for the villagers. The centre yard belongs to the entire village, and is fifteen paces square. Into this is driven at night such of the cattle as cannot obtain accommodation in the lower story. As, however, the space in the yard is very restricted, the sheep and goats are made to clamber up to the higher story, where they pass the night either inside the cupola-shaped habitations, or outside in the open air. To complete the picture, I must add that in the middle of the yard is a pool of water. The village of Sheermas comprises thirty habitations.

The people are all afflicted with skin diseases and ophthalmia.

From the short description I have given of the road from Bala Moorgab across the Paropamisus to the valley of the Heri Rood, in which lies the city of Herat, it will be apparent to everybody that many obstacles clog the route. Bala Moorgab is situated on the River Moorgab—the stream flowing through, and fructifying the oasis of Merv,—consequently, I rode along the road from Merv to Herat. *To conduct an expeditionary force of any strength along that route would be an impossibility.** On this account, I venture to contest the opinion of Rawlinson and other authorities on Central Asia, and make the assertion that *Merv is not the key of Herat.*

If the English occupied Herat we should not, on that account, be bound to take Merv ; because the annexation of that place would not in the slightest re-establish our equipoise with the English.

From Merv there is yet another route, to Serakhs, a Persian fortress on the River Heri Rood. This route, according to the information

* Italics, Grodekoff's.—C. M.

I collected on the spot, comprises the following stages :—

1. Merv to Kootchegoom	18 miles
Kootche means a "street." Sandy hills extend for four miles, and the passage over them is called the "street." No water.	
2. Kootchegoom to the Wells of Shageetli ...	27 „
The wells are four in number. From their mouths to the surface of the water below, is twelve yards. The water itself is two yards deep.	
3. Shageetli to the Well of Palizek	45 „
Only one well at the halting-place, and that situated on a precipice. Depth, twelve yards.	
4. Palizek to the boundary of Kinderley, on the River Heri Rood	45 „
Here formerly existed a Persian fortress; to-day it is in ruins.	
5. Kinderley to Serakhs	9 „
Total	144 miles.

In this manner there are three waterless stages, each forty-five miles long; and, moreover, the well of Palizek consists only of a single well, perched on a high precipice, and it would therefore be extremely risky to rely upon it for a supply of water. On this account it is necessary to reckon the distance as consisting

of two waterless marches : one ninety miles long, and the other forty-five. Three waterless marches in succession, each forty-five miles in length, constitute an obstacle which no army, of any strength, could overcome. Thus, therefore, on the Serakhs side also, *Merv is not the key of Herat*. A key serves to open and give admittance. In opening Merv, *i.e.*, in occupying it, we should not obtain admittance to Herat. Merv possesses another significance, but in nowise does it concern Herat.

CHAPTER XI.

MY STAY AT HERAT.

Djan Mahomet Khan arrives to escort me to Herat—Cabul grapes—Shere Ali's order for me to be treated in the best possible manner—Our final ride to Herat—Dinner at Soorch Rabat—First view of the city—Aspect of the valley—Strength of the field artillery at Herat—Our ride through the Bazaar—An awkward meeting—Sardar Mahomet Omar Khan—My lodgings—Mustapha astonishes the "Fifteen"—Once more at liberty—Generosity of the Sardar—I can have as much money as I like to ask for—My letter to General Razgonoff.

ON the 16th of November, Mustapha woke me early in the morning, to tell me that, late the previous night, troops had arrived from Herat, to meet me, and that the officer in charge desired an interview.

I dressed myself, and ordered him to be sent in. The officer was Djan Mahomet Khan, specially attached to the suite of the Governor-General of Herat. He congratulated me on my safe arrival, and, in the name of the Governor-General, presented me with such a quantity of delicacies, that he could not find room for them all inside my quarters, and had to stow some

of them outside on the roof. Among the delicacies were some Cabul grapes, packed in boxes. These were not arranged in bunches, as with us in Russia, but were picked from the stalks, and disposed in layers, with flocks between them. In each box were three layers. Cabul grapes are usually conveyed in this manner to India, where, as it is well known, the grape vine does not exist.

Djan Mahomet Khan told me that, in consequence of the receipt of an order from Shere Ali to accord me the very best reception possible, the Governor-General had despatched him with three squadrons of Khazadars to meet me on the Koorook road; since he imagined that I should pursue that route. For four days, he (Mahomet Djan) had been seeking me, and only accidentally had heard the previous evening that I had halted for the night at Sheermas. Setting off at once, he had arrived at Sheermas shortly before daybreak. Although there only remained a ride of about fifteen miles to Herat, Djan Mahomet urged me to stop on the road at Soorch Rabat, where he had sent a travelling kitchen, and where a dinner awaited me. Notwithstanding the early hour, and my

usual custom not to take food on the march, I acceded to his request, and agreed to stop at Soorch Rabat. Djan Mahomet then went outside the fortified village, and gave orders for the convoy * to prepare for the march. The convoy brought by Djan Mahomet consisted of Khazadar horsemen, raised from the Teimoor and Maoor tribes, living near Herat. They were dressed in short Circassian surtouts, and wore caps of the Turcoman shape, only not quite so high. Their horses were of the same breed as the Hazare and Djemshidi, and they carried muskets, supported by props. Khazadar horsemen receive fifteen rupees a month, whether they are engaged on active service or not; but they are bound to be ready at a moment's notice to join their regiments. When the convoy was ready, I rode out of the village, and passed along the front of the horsemen, the kettle-drums beating while I did so.

An hour's ride brought us to Soorch Rabat. Here, in a broad glade, amidst the ruins of a red Rabat (Soorch signifies red), had been pitched five immense tents. The largest of the

* Both my own convoy and the fresh escort from Herat had passed the night outside the village, only six men being stationed inside as a guard.

five, made of some silken material, was designated for me. Inside were a number of costly rugs and velvet cloths.* Our stay at Soorch Rabat lasted two hours. The dinner and tea provided for us were of the most luxurious character.

At Soorch Rabat opens out a view of the spacious valley of the Heri Rood, fifteen miles from side to side, and covered with villages. In the distance can be seen the city itself, with its massive ruins reminding one of Samarcand.

From Soorch Rabat we proceeded in the following order:—In front of all rode Djan Mahomet, followed by a squadron of Teimoor Khazadars. Thirty paces to the rear came myself, surrounded by a chain of horsemen belonging to the old escort. Forty paces behind me rode the second squadron of Teimoor Khazadars, then the baggage, and, finally, the squadron of Maoor Khazadars. The horsemen of the Zmaini Regiment, donned their red uniform and dress caps before setting out for Herat.

During nearly the whole of the ride we

* The tents, rugs, kitchen utensils, &c., required as many as four camels and five mules for their transport.

passed alongside villages which, notwithstanding the proximity of Herat and its huge garrison, were built exactly in the same style as Sheermas. As we rode past, the people either came out to the highway to have a glimpse at us, or sat upon the housetops. A mile and a half from the city walls we left behind us, two or three hundred yards to the left of the road, a number of sheds, containing a portion of the Herat field artillery. I counted forty bronze guns. Here also were some infantry barracks.

On reaching the city gate, Djan Mahomet stopped, and sent to enquire of me the road he should take—through the Bazaar, or direct through the city. I replied, "Through the Bazaar." Djan Mahomet thereupon turned to the left, and proceeded alongside the walls until we came to a second gate, which he entered.

Traversing several streets, we rode into the covered Bazaar. Although it was not market day, a large number of people collected along the road. Directly we entered the Bazaar, two policemen on foot posted themselves alongside me, and did not leave me until we arrived at the lodgings designated for my use at the Divan

Khan, in which resides the Governor-General himself.

I rode into a spacious yard, planted with trees and containing two ponds, and stopped my horse in front of a small flight of steps. In the gallery attached to my lodgings, the Governor-General awaited me with his suite. Not being aware of this, I went out into the gallery just as I was, in my overcoat covered with dirt and dust, and was rather confused to find myself confronted by the Governor-General, Sardar Mahomet Omer Khan. But the Sardar was even still more disturbed than myself, for he had taken off his cap, and stood before me with his bald pate exposed to view. Putting on his cap, he shook hands with me, and we sat down in the arm-chairs, while the attendants handed round tea.

I commenced conversation by expressing my thanks to the Sardar for giving me such a warm reception. I especially thanked him for not having placed any restriction on my movements, and for having thrown open everything to my inspection ; treatment wholly different from what I had experienced at Mazar-e-Shereef and Maimene. I apologised for appearing before him

in my present condition, but would don my uniform to-morrow. With his permission, I should like to stay a couple of days at Herat, and should be glad to know whether he had any objections to my examining the city.

The Sardar replied that he did not see any necessity for hiding anything from me. I might go where I liked, and examine whatever I chose. At Herat I might stay as long as I wished, and there would be no need of my concerning myself about my journey thence to the Persian frontier, since he had already completed the arrangements in regard to my escort, &c.

Afterwards, the Sardar unexpectedly turned the conversation by asking whether I was fond of fish. The fishermen, he said, had caught some splendid fish in the Heri Rood that morning, and if I liked some, he would have it served up with the dinner. He then expressed his delight at seeing me so satisfied, and said he should send off at once a *tchapar* to Cabul, with a report of my arrival. Had I anything to despatch to the Russian envoy there? He begged to apologise for not having sent the Sapar Salar (Commander-in-Chief) to meet me,

but he was away from Herat, attending a funeral. Turning then to politics, he observed that the Russians and Afghans were friends, and that he had heard a great deal of good about us. The English he did not like at all. On no account would the English Ambassador be allowed to proceed to Cabul. The audience lasted nearly an hour. Expressing a wish that I might rest well after my journey, the Sardar took his departure with his suite.

Sardar Mahomet Omer Khan, a relative of the Ameer Shere Ali, had governed the province of Herat since 1874. His control extended only over the civil part of the administration, including the management of the Khazadar contingent, or local militia; the military authority being entirely in the hands of Hussein Ali Khan. Until 1874 both the military and civil power were held by one person, Yakoob Khan, the son of the Ameer. After the rebellion of the latter against his father, however, Shere Ali thought it inadvisable to place the two offices under the authority of one individual, and therefore made them distinct. The Sardar was a man of seventy, but he was very vigorous, and looked much younger than he really was.

During the audience he wore a fur cloak, covered with a costly Cashmere shawl, and having gold lace across the breast. He was greatly praised by all I met; but everyone said that he fell short of Yakoob Khan, who had left behind him the warmest feelings on the part of the population; chiefly, it is probable, because he had raised the banner of revolt in the name of the independence of Herat, the remembrance of which is still fresh among the people.*

My quarters consisted of an immense hall, with two lights and a gallery; the latter being the place where I had had the audience with the Sardar. The hall was separated from the gallery by a partition of carved wood. In all probability the lodgings were agreeable enough in the summer, but they were rather inconvenient for November weather, since the temperature inside was the same as outside; and outside there was frost in the morning. This inconvenience was one I found easy to get reconciled to, but such was not the case with another. In the upper story of the house,

* When I was at Herat, Yakoob Khan was still in prison at Cabul. Upon his succession to the throne, the Sardar resigned his post, and was succeeded by Ayoub Khan, the brother of Yakoob Khan, who had been living in exile at Meshed, on a large pension granted by the Persian Government.

which had windows looking into the hall, lived the Treasurer; and all day long a crowd of people gathered at the windows, and watched me in everything I did. Both the hall and gallery were covered with costly rugs and carpets.

Fifteen servants were appointed to wait upon me. This large number quite staggered me when they were ushered in a body into my presence. Among them, for instance, was one who only assisted me in washing my hands, another who only swept the room, a third who only looked after the lights and did nothing else; and so on. This division of labour was striking.

The Fifteen could not understand at all how Mustapha could prepare tea, clean my boots, light the candles, &c., with no one to assist him. In Herat a man is of no value. He is not protected against the Turcomans; he is dragged from home as a conscript, and, perhaps, spends the whole of his life in handing round tea, or in preparing the *kaliana*, or water-pipe, for his superiors. To protect the doors of the Armoury, the Afghans place four men in a row, where one would be amply sufficient.

At the entrance to my lodgings was posted a sentry. An hour after the departure of the Sardar, Djan Mahomet came to enquire whether it was necessary to keep the man on guard. I might keep him there, or I might send him away, just as I liked. There was no danger whatever to be feared from any one. I said, "Of course, send him away." In this manner, for the first time since the 19th of October, that is to say, from the moment I first set foot on Afghan soil, I felt myself a free man, and no longer a prisoner.

With the departure of Djan Mahomet appeared the Treasurer. "The Sardar has heard," he said, "that you are in want of gold, and has sent me to enquire how much will suffice your wishes. The Ameer Shere Ali has given us the strictest orders to do our utmost to please you. The Sardar, in consequence, can give one or two hundred *tillas* more than you actually need."

I could not understand the Sardar's message. I had not asked him during the audience for any money—I had never thought of doing any such thing, because I had quite sufficient funds of my own.

"How did the Sardar come to hear that I was in want of gold?" I asked of the Treasurer.

"Mustapha said so," replied that functionary.

I understood it all now. Wishing to procure a few Persian gold-pieces, I had told Mustapha to buy some for me. Mustapha had enquired of the servants where he could obtain any *tillas*, and these, after answering him, had mentioned the matter to their chief. The chief, on his part, had then drawn up a report to the Sardar, stating that I had been asking for money. All this I explained to the Treasurer, but it did not satisfy him.

"Don't restrict yourself to any particular amount," he said; "we will give you whatever you ask for."

To prevent further argument, I said that I could not possibly accept any money from a foreign Government. As a traveller, I might accept its hospitality, because that was enjoined by the creed of Christians as well as by the Koran; but I could never accept money. Even if I fell short of cash, I should not think of taking any: I should sell my horse and my baggage first.

These arguments had not the slightest effect

on the Treasurer. At last, to get rid of him, I was obliged to tell him to be off, saying that I had a letter to write to Cabul. Even then, in passing out of the room, he turned round and said, for the hundredth time, "Don't restrict yourself to any particular amount: we will give you one or two hundred *tillas*," and so forth.

I then wrote General Razgonoff a letter, in which I begged him to transmit to the Ameer my thanks for the assistance I had received in traversing his dominions. This letter was sent off immediately it was handed to the Sardar, the courier designated to convey it to Cabul already awaiting it in the saddle.

CHAPTER XII.

FROM HERAT TO THE PERSIAN FRONTIER.

Visit to the Sardar—A portrait of myself—An elephant ride—Description of Herat—Its strategical importance—I bid good-bye to the Sardar, and set out for the Persian frontier—The banks of the River Heri Rood—Shekeevan—The Governor of Goorian—The Maoori—Devastation produced by the Tekke Turcomans at Koosan—Am interviewed by persons released from slavery during the Khivan Campaign of 1873—They earnestly desire for the intervention of Russia to put a stop to the Turcoman scourge—From Koosan to the Persian frontier—"The District of the 350 Ruined Villages"—Frightful aspect of the country—I cross over into Persia, and once more feel myself a free man.

ON the 17th of November I paid a visit, in full uniform, to the Sardar Mahomet Omer Khan, and afterwards to the Sapar Salar Hussein Ali Khan. The Sardar resided in a neighbouring courtyard, and, when I called upon him, was engaged transacting business. I therefore stayed only a few minutes.

The Sapar Salar lived in the citadel, which was situated about eight hundred paces from my house. Attended by Djan Mahomet and Mustapha, I proceeded thither on foot. Hussein Ali Khan awaited me in a small chamber,

attended by two generals. All three were in full dress, and sat in a row in arm-chairs. Mine was placed facing theirs.

The Sapar Salar advanced several steps to meet me, and extended his hand. The generals also rose, and shook hands with me. We then sat down, and tea was handed round by the attendants.* After the usual compliments, the conversation became general, and we talked about the Turkish war, the siege of Herat, and about Pottinger and Blaramberg. My visit lasted about half-an-hour.

On my return home, I found in my room a portrait in colours of myself, the work of a Persian writer, who had sketched me while, dressed in my uniform, I had traversed the courtyard. The portrait was not at all badly executed.

The rest of the day was spent in visiting the *metchets*. In the evening, Djan Mahomet, not knowing how to keep me occupied, enquired whether I had ever seen an elephant; adding that there had recently been three at Herat, but the previous week two of them had been sent to join the army.

* It is usual at ceremonial receptions in Afghanistan for two cups of tea to be handed round with sugar, and afterwards half a cup of tea without sugar.

I replied that I had seen an elephant, but had never ridden one—was it possible for me to have a ride? Certainly. In half an hour's time the elephant was brought, and I took two turns on it round the courtyard; the first time at a foot pace, and the second full speed.

Djan Mahomet told me that at Cabul there were 100 elephants, employed in transporting heavy baggage, and in the conveyance of mountain artillery. At Mazar-e-Shereef there was also one attached to the troops.

Herat is a very large city. It does not cede in size to Tashkent, and contains 50,000 people. Among the cities of Central Asia and Khorassan, Herat, by its buildings, occupies a place next to Meshed. The streets, as in all Asiatic towns, are narrow, crooked, and dirty. The city is surrounded by walls twelve yards high, with a shallow ditch outside. The walls are not armed with artillery. There are no outer defences of any kind; nothing that would call to mind the fortifications of a European city. In its present condition, Herat is not in a position to defend itself against a European army, since at a mile to the north it is commanded by heights, from which it could be bombarded by artillery. In

the middle of the city is the Citadel, situated on an artificial eminence. Its walls are twenty-four feet high. In front of it is a deep water ditch, covered with reeds. In several places the walls have commenced to fall into ruin. The buildings in the Citadel are constructed very close to one another.

Herat is reckoned to possess immense strategical importance. The English regard it as the key of India. As to the estimation with which it is regarded by the Afghans themselves, an idea may be easily formed from the fact that, previous to the war with the English, the Ameer quartered there twenty-five battalions of infantry. Herat in those days used to be the residence of the Commander-in-Chief of the Afghan forces. In expectation of a war with England, just before my arrival, nine battalions had been sent to the Indian frontier, thus leaving behind a garrison of sixteen battalions, with forty guns. No cavalry regiments are maintained on constant service in the province of Herat. When horsemen are required, recourse is always had to the Khazadars..

On the 19th of November, I bade good-bye to Mahomet Omer Khan and Meer Ali Khan,

and, accompanied by a squadron of Teimoor Khazadars, with Djan Mahomet at their head, set out for the Persian frontier. We rode across perfectly level country to the foot of the mountains, which latter border the valley of the Heri Rood. The valley is fifteen miles long, and broad in proportion. The ground at the foot of the mountains is entirely sterile, and consists of gravel. The villages are gathered in clusters along the course of the Heri Rood, the banks of which are covered with an unbroken succession of buildings, fields, and gardens.

We stopped for the night at Shekeevan. When within a mile and a half of the village, we were met by the Governor of Goorian, Shagasi Samat Ali Khan, with three hundred horsemen, who had received orders to escort me to the Persian frontier. The escort was accompanied by the standard-bearer of the regiment.* All the troopers were of the Maoor tribe, which derives its name from Maoro, or Merv, to which oasis it was deported in the reign of Nadeer Shah, and from which it subsequently returned when the city fell into ruins. The whole of them were mounted on splendid horses.

* Every thousand Khazadars is furnished with a standard.

Although the Maoor tribesmen belong to the Persian race, it is easy to observe a distinction in their form, their features, their fresher appearance, and their greater regularity of dress. They have the reputation of being a brave people.

The distance from Herat to Shekeevan is about thirty miles. The road is traversed twice by small streams; but is, all the same, a very easy one.

On the 20th of November, with an escort of 400 horsemen, headed by the Governor of Goorian, we arrived at Rozanak. The march was about nineteen miles long. During the day, we moved forward with greater watchfulness than hitherto; scouts being sent on in advance along the mountains.

The village of Rozanak is half in ruins. The people suffer terribly from Turcoman raids. Everywhere there are towers of refuge.

On the 21st of November we reached Koosan, the last populated point as far as the Persian frontier. The ride was twenty-four miles long. The first half of the road proceeds across perfectly level country; the second traverses mountain spurs stretching towards the north. Close to the road, on the left hand side, flows the

River Heri Rood, the banks of which are covered all the way with trees and brushwood. The woods afford concealment to bands of Turcomans, who usually avail themselves of the shelter to wait for and surprise their prey. On this account, during the ride of the 21st, scouts were thrown out along both sides of the road. Not far from Koosan, we met a number of people returning to Herat from Meshed, whither they had carried for burial the body of one of the relations of the Sapar Salar Hussein Ali Khan.

Three parts of Koosan lie in ruins. I was told that there was not a single family in the place that had not had a member carried off into slavery by the Tekkes. Here I was interviewed by many persons who had been freed from slavery in Khiva in 1873. On entering my presence they bowed themselves low to the ground, kissed my hand and the hem of my cloak, and thanked the White Tsar and the Russians for liberating them from slavery. Was it possible, they asked, that the White Tsar allowed the Tekkes to pursue their raids here without interference? Their sole hope against the Tekkes was Russia. They had plenty of land, they said, plenty of water, forests in

abundance, and Turcomans beyond everything. How was it possible to live, situated as they were?

As a testimony of the impossibility of living at Koosan, they served up, after escorting me to the kitchen of the Sardar, green barley bread, the produce of the locality. Three parts of the population, I was assured, had migrated from the village, and the rest, although hanging on, made no effort to defend it. And it was into this unhappy village that the Governor of Goorian made a triumphal entry, all the Khazadars of the locality being placed in a line to receive him!

The Heri Rood, with its almost impenetrable thickets, approaches close to Koosan. The people know quite well that this is the chief source of their misery, since, if the trees did not exist so close to their village, they would not suffer so much from Turcoman ambuscades. But they are not in a condition to cut the forests down, and have thus to bewail the frequency of Turcoman attacks. In all the fields are towers of refuge.

As I knew that the following morning, November the 22nd, I should quit Afghanistan

for good, I wrote over night a letter to Mahomet Omer Khan, of Herat, thanking him for the kindness he had displayed towards me.

The stage from Koosan to the Persian border-village of Kareez is considered the most dangerous of all, because the River Heri Rood runs close to the road, and, moreover, one has to cross the stream in the midst of a dense forest. On this account, the night before the march, strong patrols were sent out to the mountains and thickets, to see whether any Turcomans were hiding about the place.

The road is perfectly level. The Heri Rood, at the place where the track crosses it, flows through four channels, of which the largest is eighty yards wide. The water at the ford reaches up to the saddle girth. The bottom consists of gravel, interspersed with huge stumps of trees.

From the spot where the road crosses the river, the Heri Rood turns to the north, and flows towards Serakhs, through a district once containing 350 populous settlements. To-day the whole of these lie in ruins, owing to the Turcoman raids. Among the natives the district is commonly spoken of as "The District of the 350 Ruined Villages."

Along the whole of the road from Koosan to Kareez, notwithstanding the fact of the country being entirely a waste, I saw at every step evidences of the frightful results of the Tekke Alamans. These evidences were chiefly in the shape of graves, in which are interred the victims of the nomads' raids. The graves lie along the road, and as far on either side of it as the eye can reach. I did not count the graves, but I was told that more than a thousand people lie buried about the place.

In consequence of the dangerous character of the direct route between Meshed and Herat, it is rarely used by caravans, which take the circuitous road *viâ* Toorbet-e-Haidari and Kaf to Goorian. The insignificant traffic along the first-named route may be estimated from the fact, that the right to collect the frontier dues at Kareez is farmed out for less than £3,000.

On approaching the ruins of Kafeer Kala, we saw to the left of the road a cloud of dust. Thinking it to be Turcomans advancing, the Shagasi sent a squadron of Khazadars towards the spot. These discovered it to be a caravan, which was proceeding along the foot of the mountains, in order to be able to retire among the rocks and

defend itself, in the event of a Turcoman attack. The caravan, taking the squadron to be Turcomans, hastily prepared for the battle, but the mistake was soon explained, and the Khazadars joined us afresh at the ruined Rabat of Dogar, once a boundary mark between Persia and Afghanistan.

At Dogar the Shagasi sent a letter to the headman of the village of Kareez, requesting him to despatch an escort to accompany me across the frontier. The headman, in reply, sent thirty horsemen. Regarding this number as insufficient, the Shagasi, who did not consider that he himself would be justified in crossing the frontier, sent with me to Kareez a hundred of his Khazadars, and remained at Dogar until their return. On reaching Kareez I furnished the chief of the escort with a paper, certifying my safe arrival on Persian soil.

Notwithstanding the solicitude for my safety and comfort which I everywhere experienced during my ride from Mazar-e-Shereef to Dogar, I felt a relief in stepping upon the soil of Persia, where I knew I should no longer have sentries placed over me, and officials appointed to dog my steps. Still, with the first footstep I took on Persian soil beyond Kareez, I regretted that I no

longer had an Afghan escort to accompany me,
and felt to the fullest my utter defencelessness
in a region so open to the raids of the devastating
Turcomans.

CONCLUDING REMARKS.

IN his personal narrative of his ride through Afghanistan, Colonel Grodekoff makes two statements which are sure to occasion some notice in this country. One is that Merv is not the key of Herat; the other, that the people dwelling along the north of Afghanistan and to the west of Herat ardently long for the advent of Russia, to deliver them from the yoke of the Afghans, or the still more desolating scourge of nomad irruptions. If these statements be correct, and Colonel Grodekoff's narrative is so manly and straightforward that he cannot possibly be charged with intentional deception, then the question arises—Do we over-estimate the value of Merv: and are we prepared to undertake such measures as will, by ameliorating the condition of the Uzbeks, prevent them from falling under Russian rule?

I leave it for geographers and military travellers to decide whether it is possible, with chances of success, to conduct an effective expeditionary

force from Merv to Serakhs, or from Merv to Herat. Colonel Grodekoff lays stress on the absence of water along the road, but I cannot help expressing my belief, and this belief is supported by what the Russians have successfully accomplished in Turkestan and in the region beyond the Caspian, that, if engineering parties were sent out in advance, at the proper season of the year, it would be possible to open up wells and construct reservoirs at closer intervals than exist between those strategical points at the present moment. The magnificent commercial position enjoyed by Herat exerts such a powerful attractive force over the surrounding region, that once the Russians penetrated to Merv, and colonies of Penza peasants and Kouban Cossacks became established along the fruitful oasis watered by the Moorgab, the road running to Herat would rapidly undergo improvement; and this improvement, in time of peace, would fit it for the advance of an army in time of war.

Grodekoff's second objection to Merv being considered the key of Herat rests upon the assumption, that if the road he traversed from the Moorgab was difficult for him, a solitary

rider, unencumbered by baggage, what must it not prove to an expeditionary force weighted with heavy artillery. The best answer to this would probably be given by Grodekoff himself, were he military governor of Merv, and under orders to capture Herat. Leaving aside the question of the probability of other and more convenient roads existing than the one described by him, the mountains north-west of Herat can hardly be more inaccessible to Russian troops than the peaks and precipices of the Caucasus. We all know what a feeble barrier a mountain range is to a skilful and determined commander. It is not so long ago that the whole of England laughed to scorn the notion of Russia conducting a winter campaign across the Balkans. It was impossible, we said, for an army to traverse a mountain range, neck-deep in snow. The world knows what became of our predictions. While we were still wagging our heads, and uttering words of wisdom, the robust children of the north were scattering the Turks south of the Balkans; and, before we had time to make up our mind whether we should fight Russia or not, the Cossacks were already within a canter of Constantinople. Russia's success in crossing an

“impossible” mountain range, at an “impossible” season of the year, secured for her the mouth of the Danube and the key of Asia Minor. It would not be advisable to give her another such chance on the confines of our Asiatic empire.

If Merv is not the key of Herat, it is, at least, the stepping-stone; and history shows what skilful use Russia has made in the past of stepping-stones,* carelessly ceded to her by unwary enemies.

In the event of a Russian army succeeding in reaching Merv, the power of the Tekkes, Grodekoff tells us, might easily and effectively be shattered, once for all, by the confiscation of their famous breed of horses. Without his horse, the Turcoman is helpless; and the result of such a seizure would probably be to fix the nomads to the soil, which, at Merv, no less than in Akhal, is of surprising fertility. The second operation of Russia would probably be to establish a line of Cossack or Caucasian*

* It is a circumstance which should be thoughtfully considered by Englishmen, that Russia's system of subjugating and pacifying Asiatics is so effective, that newly-annexed subjects readily conform to her rule. In the Akhal Tekke Expedition of 1879, General Lomakin received great assistance from four *sotnias* of Daghestanis, raised from among Schamyl's own highlanders; men engaged only a few years earlier in waging a deadly war for their independence. It is not yet forgotten how loudly the

colonies from Tchikishlar to Tchardjui—from the Caspian to the Oxus. Forts already exist up the Atrek to within four marches of the Kopet Dagħ, and the line could easily be extended thence to Akhal; afterwards running through Dengeel Tepé, Askabat, and Merv, to the Bokharan fortress of Tchardjui.

Unfortunately for the tranquility of the East, the weakest borders of Persia and Afghanistan are precisely those which face this coveted boundary of Russia. Any attempt by Russia to invade Azerbaijan from the Caucasus, or to land a force at Asterabad, would undoubtedly provoke a storm of indignation in England; because the public would at once see that the integrity of Persia was directly threatened, and the overland route to India involved in danger. But were Russia to pursue her operations quietly on the side of Khorassan, from a base along the Kopet Dagħ, she would incur no such peril of interference; since, although she would occasion irritation in England, the feeling, never-

Lazes at Batoum declared, in 1878, their determination of resisting to the last the annexation of the town by Russia. Yet, within a twelvemonth, Russia had so far overcome their hostility, that it was considered safe to provide the Governor of Batoum, General Komaroff, with a body-guard raised from among those brave defenders of a rotten and worthless administration.

theless, would not be powerful enough to impel the latter country to war.

In Khorassan, and along the north of Persia, no sentiment of patriotism seems to exist that might serve as a barrier to Russia's progress southwards. Gospodin Ogorodnikoff, a Russian traveller who visited the country two or three years ago, and subsequently published an account of his experiences under the suggestive title of "Golden Khorassan," says: "At Meshed the people did not attempt to conceal from me their desire to see themselves brought under the rule of Russia. 'We are robbed and maltreated by the Turcomans,' they said: 'but it is only necessary for Russia to send a regiment against Merv, and Merv can be taken. When Merv is taken, then things will be well for Khorassan. When Khorassan is taken, then things will be better still for Khorassan.' As regards the Persian authorities, they will do anything for money. To my question as to the sentiments of the Emir, or Governor, of Khorassan, respecting the possible occupation of Merv by Russia, the people said: 'The Emir loves money, and the Turcomans give him horses,' silver, and costly carpets; if Russia takes Merv, he will lose all these good

things: hence his hostility to Russia.'” Impliedly, if Russia gave the Emir more than he annually receives from the Turcomans, he would withdraw his opposition to their progress.

Thus, therefore, were Russia to occupy Akhal and Merv, she would be in a position to work southwards until her influence extended to the road running from Asterabad to Herat—the real road from Russia to India. Once she fastened a hold upon Khorassan, the rest of Persia would rapidly fall to pieces under the pressure of the influences operating from Mount Ararat to Merv. The real danger of the conquest of the Turcomans does not consist in the mere annexation of Merv, but in the means that Russia would thereby derive of encroaching upon the forests and dales of Golden Khorassan. And these encroachments would eventually imperil Herat, and, consequently, prove a menace to our supremacy in India.

In the event of Russia establishing a frontier cordon from Tchardjui to Merv, how long could we expect the border to remain unchanged? Grodekoff tells us plainly that the whole of the country lying between Herat and the Moorgab, and between the Hindoo Koosh and the Oxus, groans

under the foreign sway of the Afghan, and desires deliverance by Russia. There is every reason to believe that the Uzbeks would be just as pleased with the administration of England as with that of Russia ; for what the people really want, is not so much the rule of the White Tsar as the establishment of any government that shall give them peace, and secure their lives and property from the Afghans. As we ourselves have succeeded to the Ameer'ship of Shere Ali, we are in duty bound to provide for the safety of the Uzbeks ; and it should be our earliest care to erect a powerful administration over the provinces traversed by Colonel Grodekoff. Unless we do this, and do this speedily, too, we may rely upon it, that Russia herself will accept the responsibility, and the Hindoo Koosh will then become the boundary line of the two empires instead of the River Oxus.

There is a class of writers in England,—men, as a rule, dead to the impulses of patriotism—who assure us that we have acquired sufficient territory in Asia, and that we have no right to prepare for a future invasion of India by the annexation of the chaotic petty States beyond our frontier. Such writers, as a rule,

are supporters of the theory that Russia has a civilising mission in Central Asia. Now, if this theory in regard to Russia be true, such writers must perforce agree that it is equally applicable to this country. And if Russia, owing to this civilising mission, is to be excused in pushing out her frontiers southwards, then we, on the same grounds, are to be pardoned for advancing our border north-westwards. Further, it is a matter of fact that our rule in India is infinitely more beneficial to the natives than the rule of Russia to the people in Central Asia. Hence, if the theory of the civilising mission is to be accepted at all, we have a greater right to annex territory than Russia has.

But such theories are too sentimental for the general public. The Central Asian Question, as it at present stands, resolves itself into this :—In a very short space of time the Empires of England and Russia in Central Asia will touch each other ; query, where shall the frontier line be drawn ? Years ago, people used to speak of the Oxus as the probable line ; but when Russia found that when matters came to a crisis she could always expect concessions from England, or compromises of the same character as conces-

sions, she began to refer to the Hindoo Koosh as the future frontier.

I believe that the majority of English writers on Central Asia are agreed that Russia ought not to be allowed to push across the Oxus to Balkh, Andkhai, and Maimene; and, in recent times, there has grown up a powerful reason why this policy should be upheld. Since the Oxus burst its banks at Khiva a few years ago, and began to flow across the desert, Russia has displayed great interest and activity in the problem of conducting the stream to the Caspian; and there is a strong probability that, eventually, a portion of the river, perhaps the whole, will be led into the Bay of Krasnovodsk. At the same time, a series of investigations are being undertaken with a view to the construction of a canal system connecting the Black Sea with the Caspian.

Should Russia succeed in establishing a regular water-way between the Black Sea and the Caspian, and thence, by means of the Oxus, across the desert to Bokhara and Afghanistan, it is obvious that the River Oxus will acquire immense commercial importance; because it will tap the trade of Central Asia. Irrespective of the danger of having Cossacks in the

Hindoo Koosh, which has been quite often enough pointed out by specialists without my reverting to it here, it is equally apparent that should Russia obtain supreme control over the Oxus, we shall be entirely excluded, by hostile tariffs and vexatious restrictions, from participation in this great trade growth of the future.

The common objection to our interference in the affairs of Afghanistan is, the fresh responsibilities we are likely to acquire thereby. But Russia is bent on bringing her frontier alongside our own; and if we wait until the Uzbek States, tired of anarchy, pass under the control of the Cossack, the responsibilities arising then will be far greater than those which we shirk now. We may depend upon it, that it is the same with empires as with individuals: a policy of negation means a policy of stagnation, deterioration, and ruin. It is nonsense to assert that we have sufficient responsibilities on our hands: more than we can adequately provide for. There are hundreds of civil administrators and military officers in England, with their time lying idle on their hands, or frittered away in useless political controversies, who would govern Afghan Turkestan for us if the country were taken charge of.

There are hundreds of merchants, with capital lying useless in the banks, who would proceed to Herat, Maimene, Saripool, and Balkh, to-morrow, and develop the resources of the country, if they could be guaranteed security of life and property. There are thousands of people out of work and starving, who would be benefited directly or indirectly by the establishment of our rule throughout Afghanistan, and the consequent creation of fresh markets for our surplus manufactures. We are none the poorer for the territorial responsibilities which our forefathers so freely heaped upon their shoulders. Nay, we are richer thereby; for we owe entirely our position of ascendancy to their pluck in accepting territorial responsibilities, when opportunities were placed in their way by Fortune. And, in the same manner, if we are to leave a heritage to our children capable of competing with the growing power of Russia, we must not frighten ourselves with valetudinarian theories about being overworked and breaking down. Once a nation begins to coddle itself, its ascendancy is doomed. It is not so long ago that our colonies were young and helpless, and drew upon our strength to support and defend them. To-day things are differ-

ent. Canada is able not only to defend herself, but to help the mother country also. Both Australia and New Zealand are capable of maintaining their own against any attacks of our enemies. So far as the Cape is concerned, another five years will see the colonies there welded together, and in a position to maintain themselves without assistance from England. It is true that in the event of hostilities with a naval Power, we should be bound to despatch men-of-war for the protection of some of the colonial ports and shipping; but it must not be forgotten that even if these did not exist, we should have to protect our own mercantile marine in distant seas; and the colonial ports, in the aggregate, repay us our trouble of defence by the usefulness of many of them as naval stations. England's responsibilities are waning in America and Australia: they are waxing in Asia and Africa. What is needed is not that we should shirk these new avenues of influence, but that we should invest the energy and force withdrawn from Canada and Australia in the development of our power in Asia. The continent of Africa can be safely left to look after itself for a time: we have no Russia there to menace our supremacy. But our Destiny

demands that we should deal vigorously with Turkey, Persia, and Afghanistan; and we may depend upon it, that the more earnestly we take the task in hand, and the more resolutely we decide those questions of policy, over which we have been wasting our time in fruitless discussion for years, the greater will be the success attending our efforts.

The dignity of England demands that we should make up our minds speedily whether Russia is, or is not, to be allowed to occupy Merv. Our blusterings in the past have been so uniformly followed by compromises and concessions, that our threats are no longer regarded as possessing any value. We said for years that Russia should never annex Khiva. She has got it. We said she should never domineer over Kashgar. Her troops to-day not only occupy passes a few marches from the city, but by the treaty signed by Tchoon Kow in 1879, Russia has the right to establish agents throughout Eastern Toorkestan; from which we ourselves are excluded. We said that Persia should always be preserved from encroachment. The Shah to-day wears a Cossack's uniform, and the Atrek region is becoming a second Turkestan. We said that

Russia should never repossess Bessarabia and the mouth of the Danube ; we said that Batoum, the best port on the Caucasian coast, should never become a Russian prize ; we said that Kars, the key of Asia Minor, should never fall into the hands of the Muscovite. Yet these three great possessions were secretly signed away to Russia by Lord Salisbury over a cup of tea, and a fresh instance was afforded to the Emperor of the emptiness of English threats and English bluster.

If we are determined not to allow Russia to occupy Merv, let us say so at once, and resolutely stick to our declaration. If we are indifferent to the annexation of Merv by Russia, by all means let us put a speedy close to a clamour which, for fifteen years, we have been raising against Russia in that quarter, without, in the slightest degree, impeding the accomplishment of her aggressive designs.

APPENDIX.

SAMARCAND TO MAZAR-E-SHEREEF.

THIS portion of the journey from Samarcand to Herat, omitted by Colonel Grodekoff, was described in the *Golos* in 1879 by Doctor Yávorsky, who was attached to the Russian Embassy at Cabul in the capacity of physician. Yavorsky traversed the road twice, and attended Shere Ali at Mazar-e-Shereef during the last moments of that unfortunate ruler.

* * * * *

On the 9th of December, 1878, we set out from Samarcand, accompanied by an escort of ten Cossacks, an interpreter, and a few *djigits*, or horsemen. Our pack horses amounted to eighteen. Believing that we should encounter severe cold in traversing the mountain passes of Bolshoi Eeran and Kala (each 13,000 feet above the level of the sea), and knowing the country to be chilly and damp during the winter season, we paid particular attention to the equipment of our expeditionary party with warm tents and clothing. Of the former we had a choice of two kinds—the Kirghiz *kibitka* and the hair-cloth tent. The *kibitka* is a tent in the shape of a beehive, consisting of cow-hair cloth strapped upon a framework. The hair-cloth tent is smaller than the *kibitka*, is shaped like a cone, and has straight sticks for the framework instead of crooked. Both of these, however, were unsuitable for our journey; mainly on account of their weight—two *kibitkas* weighing, at the least, half a ton—and the length of time necessary to put them together, or take them to pieces. On this account we had to improvise a tent of our own, selecting

the materials of the cone-shaped native tent, and altering them till we fashioned one weighing about a hundred weight (40 lbs. heavier when wet), capable of holding with ease and comfort five or six persons. While the tents were being constructed for our party, we completed our other preparations for the journey. In changing our Russian money into Bokharan currency, we found the paper rouble to be worth only sixty kopeeks.* On referring to the Russian newspapers at Samarcand, we found the average exchange value in the European capitals to be sixty-two and a half kopeeks, the price quoted at Paris being sixty-one and a quarter; thus showing the Sarts and the Jews of Samarcand to be fully alive to the worth of the rouble abroad.

"From Samarcand we took the road to the Karatubin Pass. This route possesses several advantages, owing to the fact of its being the shortest to the Oxus; but it can hardly be termed a convenient one, as it runs for a considerable distance over mountainous country. Several portions of the route, indeed, are particularly unpleasant for travelling; the Karatubin Pass, for instance, which is exceedingly steep, the road traversing rocky ground of granite, and at places, especially at the summit, extremely slippery. From Yar Tepe also to Kaltaminar the road is very bad; the ground being rocky and covered with gravel and stones. The length of this route, from Samarcand to Patta Keesar, on the Oxus, is about 263 miles.

"We set out from Samarcand at four o'clock in the afternoon. To the nearest station, Karatube, a rather large *kishlak*, the distance was ninety-four miles, most of which we had to traverse by night. The moon, however, was at its full, and made the night as light as day. Before long we began to experience chilly gusts of wind from the snow-covered mountains, and these grew keener the further we

* A rouble contains 100 kopeeks.

advanced. For most of the way the road ran across the open steppe, but at length it turned into the defile, and we saw before us the glimmer of the fires at Karatube. A horseman was sent on in front to order lodgings for ourselves and forage for the horses; and, by the time we had reached the caravanserai, everything was in readiness for our party.

“The following day we had before us the difficult task of traversing the Karatubin Pass. The road for a long time ran through the defile, the ascent being very gradual; but everywhere it was strewn with gravel and pieces of rock. Only during the last two or three miles did the ascent become at all steep. The summit of the pass was slippery to the extreme. This arose from the fact of the road traversing the smooth granite surface of the mountain, which, in addition, was covered with a thin film of ice. Here the ice does not melt, even when exposed to the rays of the midday sun. The last mile of the road to the summit was covered deep with snow; the brooks also being a frozen mass of ice. At the same time, lower down the defile, could be seen green grass, growing alongside rippling streams. The height of the pass is about 6,000 feet. The southern declivity we found to be entirely free from snow, and half way down the mountain, where the road was shorter and steeper than on the northern slope, we saw flowers growing alongside the track. On one side of the road was a vertical cliff, and on the other a gloomy, deep abyss.

“From the summit of the pass opens out a magnificent view of the Valley of Shahrissabs. The towns of Kitab, Shaar, and a little to the east, Yakobak, can be discerned as clearly as though they were on the palm of the hand. The entire valley looks like a gulf, the upper part of which, a little to the east of the Karatubin Pass, forces itself like a wedge between the Samarcand mountains and the south-western spurs of the Khazrat Sultan. To the left rises the huge mountainous mass of

Khazrat Sultan, deeply covered with snow. The descent from the pass is very steep, and about four miles long. Afterwards, the road runs direct into the village of Kainar, belonging to Bokhara.

“ Just before reaching the village of Kainar we were met by the son of the Bek of Kitab. After the usual compliments, he said that he had been sent by his father to enquire after the health of the doctor (Yavorsky) accompanying the party. From him we learnt that the Emir was at Shaar, at which intelligence we were rather surprised, as Mozaffar Eddin usually spends the winter at Bokhara. We had wanted to pass through Bokhara without stopping on the road to pay a visit to the Emir; but the proximity of the Emir's court, and the preparations which the Bokharan officials had made for our reception, caused us to decide otherwise.

“ On approaching the town of Kitab we were met by the chief authorities: Oodaiche Shadi Bek, Door Been Bey, Abdookhalil Bey, and Yakshi Bek, all of them the principal personages of the Court of the Emir. After giving us a hearty welcome, they enquired respecting the health of General Kaufmann, General Ivanoff, and other Russian functionaries at Tashkent and Samarcand. Several of them had visited both these towns a good many times in the capacity of members of Bokharan Embassies, while nearly all had been at Samarcand in 1878 during the presence there of the Russian headquarters.*”

“ During the rest of the journey to Kitab, the greatest respect was paid to the doctor, who was looked upon as an Eltchi. At the entrance into Kitab, he was met by several personages he had become acquainted with during his journey

* In June, 1878, in anticipation of a war with England, several columns set out from Turkestan in the direction of Afghanistan and India. The Tashkent column penetrated as far as Djam, fifty-two miles south of Samarcand on the Bokharan frontier; and remained there until the Treaty of Berlin was signed.—C. M.

through the place with General Stolietoff; among them Abdul Gafar Inak, the Bek of Kitab himself.

"The fortress of Kitab does not differ materially from others in Central Asia. During our stay in the town we enjoyed to the utmost Bokharan hospitality, which has passed into a proverb in Central Asia. From Kitab we proceeded to Shaar, six miles to the south-west, being accompanied the whole way by a crowd of personages on horseback; and were greeted warmly by the people of Shaar on our arrival.*

"From Shaar we proceeded, *via* Yartube, Kaltaminar, Karakhoval, Sirab, and Shirabad, to the Oxus. As far as Yartube the road runs along the Valley of Shahrisabs, which, all the way, is well tilled, and rather thickly populated. On every side may be seen stacks of wheat and barley, hay ricks, and other signs of the industry of the people; and even if the inhabitants are somewhat unsettled in their habits, they do not seem to be a bit the poorer for it. Most of the inhabitants of the valley are Sarts, but there is a sprinkling of Uzbeks among them. Agriculture constitutes the chief occupation of the people.

"Twelve miles from Yartube (from Shaar to Yartube the distance is thirty miles) the fields give way to steppe land, and eight miles further on recommence again, continuing the rest of the way to Yartube. From Yartube to Shirabad the road traverses a mountainous region. At several places it is very bad for travellers, as, for instance, the march from Yartube to Kaltaminar, and afterwards from Karakhoval to Shoorob; besides which, it is necessary to pass through the celebrated defile of the 'Iron Gate,' which is a mere crack, inundated in the spring with water from the melting of the snow on the

An excellent account of Kitab and Shaar is given in Mr. Eugene Schuyler's "Turkistan;" and as Yavorsky's is very meagre, I suppress it. After leaving Shaar, Schuyler went on to Karshi, and thence across the desert to Bokhara; while Yavorsky journeyed by a different route to the River Oxus.—C.M.

summit. From Shoorob to Sirab the road runs through the still more difficult defile of Shoorob. This, however, as well as the previous one, can be avoided; and in the spring, travellers always take another track, in order to escape the torrent which flows through the defile, bearing with it, in its course, huge masses of rock.

"The village of Sirab is a very comfortable little place, situated in a shallow ravine, at the very foot of the mountain range. It is thickly surrounded by gardens containing nut trees, pistachio trees, peach trees, and several sorts of grape vines. Not far from the village is a stream containing abundance of fish. Two immense plane trees, several hundred years old, grow one on each side of the stream. The natives say that under these trees once rested the Caliph Assi, which would give them an age of over a thousand years. The diameter of one of them, five feet from the ground, is nearly ten yards. On the bark is cut with a knife, 'Lieutenant-Colonel Maeff: 1875.' *

"At Shirabad the mountains come to an end, and the traveller once more finds himself on steppe land. The distance from Shirabad to the Oxus is about thirty-eight miles, the road being tolerably good, except during the last ten or fifteen miles, where it crosses sandy soil. Not far from Patta Keesar, the ferry across the Oxus are the extensive ruins of an ancient city. Mounds of burnt brick cover the country for miles. The only portion of the city standing erect is a tower, about ten yards high, with three inscriptions running round the building. The inscriptions appeared to me to be in Chinese. -I asked one of the educated Bokharans accompanying us to read them, but he replied that the characters were not Mussulman, *i.e.*, not Arabic. The natives have no traditions whatever about the

* Lieutenant-Colonel Maeff, of the General Staff, was the first Russian to traverse this road. Two years later, in 1877, he was sent by General Kaufmann again to the district to examine the various roads leading to Balkh. He is now editor of the *Turkestan Gazette*." C.M.

city, the history of which seems to be entirely forgotten. Among the ruins may be easily traced the remains of immense irrigation canals, overgrown with weeds.

“Patta Keesar is a small village, with gardens containing numbers of white mulberry trees, a sign that the culture of silk is one of the industries of the people. The Oxus here is 500 yards wide, with a depth in the middle of nine feet. In the summer, during the melting of the snow, the river is more than a mile wide, and the water deepens to eighteen and even twenty-four feet. In August, when I traversed the river, its volume was so swollen that at Tchooshka Hissar, a ferry thirty miles below Patta Keesar, the steppe was inundated for a considerable distance from the banks. The ferry at Tchooshka Hissar was, at that period, wholly impracticable, and General Stolietoff, in consequence, had to proceed to Patta Keesar. The ferry boats consist of two pre-historic craft, which are dragged across the river by horses fastened to them.

“On crossing over to the other side, we found waiting for us an escort of Afghans, to conduct us to Mazar-e-Shereef. Along the river stretches a small forest, five miles long and a mile and a half broad. Having traversed this, we emerged upon a regular desert. Small bunches of *saksaul*, almost lost amidst the sand hills, were the only signs of vegetation that anywhere met the gaze. On the distant horizon could be just dimly discerned the outline of the mountains. The desert stretches for thirty miles north to south, or from the Oxus to the mountains; towards the west it runs uninterruptedly till it merges with the Turcoman wastes.

“Thirty miles from the Amu Daria, on the edge of the desert, is situated the village of Seeyagdeer, alongside the ruins of the city of the same name. Not a single upright portion of any structure is to be found among the ruins, and it is impossible to tell the original style of architecture of the buildings that once existed there. Twenty-three miles beyond is Mazar-

e-Shereef, with the Hindoo Koosh fifteen miles in the rear.

“ On entering Mazar-e-Shereef one expects to find something original there, since Afghan Turkestan has long been *terra incognita*, and innumerable fables have circulated in Europe about the country. The hope of finding something uncommon in the place is rendered all the stronger by the circumstance that those few travellers who have succeeded in penetrating to this region—Burnes, the Englishman, being the first—have told so many wonderful stories about it. But Mazar-e-Shereef is only Central Asia over again; it is the same as Tashkent, Karshi, Shaar, and other towns: everywhere one sees the same dingy bricks, the same narrow dusty streets, the same gardens, the same type of people—with a few Afghans among them, it is true—and the same bazaar.

“ I put up at the same building in the town which had afforded shelter to the Russian Mission in the summer of 1878. Everything was the same as it had been before—no alterations whatever had taken place. Only on the plane trees were carved two mementoes of passing travellers:—

* N. Grodekoff.

‘ From the 7th to the 19th October,* 1878.’ And underneath it:—

‘ P. M. 23rd November, 1878.’

the latter being the inscription of Colonel Matvaeff, who called here on his way to Badakshan. Grodekoff was the officer who, in proceeding home on leave, chose the strange route to Russia, *via* Mazar-e-Shereef, Maimene, Herat, Meshed and the Caucasus.”

* * * *

A few months after Shere Ali arrived at Mazar-e-Shereef, broken in health and a fugitive, and was attended by Doctor Yavorsky until his death.

* Old Style.

GOSPODIN PASHINO ON ABDURRAHMAN KHAN.

SOME time ago the *Times* mystified the public one morning, by announcing in its official intelligence column that the statement telegraphed from Russia, that the Earl of Beaconsfield had furnished a letter of introduction to M. Pashino, a Russian traveller desirous of visiting Afghanistan, was entirely without foundation, adding that the Premier had no knowledge of any such person whatever. Everybody naturally enquired who Pashino was; and no one vouchsafing an answer, the impression became general that Pashino was a mythical personage, the offspring of the imagination of some Continental journalist, "hard up" for news.

In reality, however, Pashino was a genuine living character, and a man of a certain amount of importance; having undertaken in his time several ambiguous journeys to India, and officiated, while at Tashkent, as interpreter to Abdurrahman Khan.

The opinion of such an individual as Pashino regarding the pretender to the Afghan throne, naturally derives weight from his close intercourse with him in Turkestan; and his views on Central Asia, expressed in the following article, will be read with greater interest, if preceded by one or two details respecting his career.

On concluding his studies at the St. Petersburg University in 1856, Gospodin Pashino proceeded to the Tartar University of Kazan, where he spent several years in conducting philological investigations, and in writing for the *Sovremennik* review. In 1861 the Russian Government secured his services, and sent him to Teheran as Junior Secretary to the Embassy at the Court of the Shah. In 1864 he contributed a series of

articles on "Persia" to the weekly supplement of the *Rooski Invalide*, the organ of the Ministry of War. Two years later he was transferred from Persia to Turkestan, in the capacity of agent of the Minister of Foreign Affairs; and, during his stay there, acted for a time as interpreter to Abdurrahman Khan. In 1873 he set out on his first trip to India, and on his return contributed a series of articles on that country to the *Golos*. The following year he undertook a second journey to India, his expenses this time being defrayed by the Cesarevitch, and returned home through Persia. In 1875 he circumnavigated the globe, in company with a son of the great Moscow cotton-mill owner and millionaire, Khludoff. His impressions were afterwards published in the *Golos*, *Grajdantin*, and several other journals. In 1878 he paid a third visit to India, with the intention of proceeding to Cabul, but the impending hostilities between the English and the Ameer made a journey from the north-west frontier, through the Khyber Pass, impracticable. As is well known, the Russian Embassy at Cabul in 1878 suffered great inconvenience from the ignorance of the members composing it of Oriental languages, and the absence of a good interpreter. The impression is strong on my mind that the object of Pashino's visit to India that year was to proceed to Cabul to act as interpreter to the Embassy, a post for which his wonderful linguistic powers and his diplomatic training well fitted him. If this be true, the conduct of the Russian Government in sending, by a short cut through our dominions, a mouth-piece to an embassy whose arrival at the Afghan capital had caused us the bitterest vexation, was about the most amazing piece of Russian "cheek" that I know of.

The disclaimer in the "*Times*" originated in the following manner:—A Gospodin Dobroff, connected with the *Odessa Vestnik*, met Pashino on the Russian steamer "Elborous" at Constantinople, and in course of conversation, learnt from him, that during his recent visit to India, he had been furnished with a letter of recommendation from the Earl of

Beaconsfield, and also from Lord Loftus. This information he published in the *Odessa Vestnik*, where it met the eye of the Correspondent of the *Times*, and got telegraphed to England ; there to be solemnly contradicted by a statesman who rarely condescends to notice the statements of the press.

Shortly afterwards Gospodin Pashino returned to Odessa, and, inviting Dobroff to his lodgings, proceeded to take him to task for publishing false reports concerning himself. Dobroff maintained that he had only repeated what Pashino had said on board the steamer, and was proceeding to discuss the matter with the traveller when some visitors arrived, and he was obliged to cut short the interview. Pashino subsequently vented his spleen upon the journalist by denouncing him in a *feuilleton* in the *Tiflis Vestnik*, and to sustain its reputation, the *Odessa Vestnik*, published Dobroff's account of the origin of the report.

In September, 1879, while the excitement consequent on the massacre of the English Embassy at Cabul was at its height, Pashino received a sudden summons to proceed from Odessa to Livadia, where the Emperor was then staying. Postponing indefinitely a public lecture which he had promised to give to the students of the New Russian University on "Afghanistan," Pashino set off for the Crimea, and afterwards proceeded direct to Tiflis, where he has remained until now. What services he may be rendering the Grand Duke Michael at the present moment, I am unable to say ; but it is obvious that his presence at Tiflis must be advantageous to the Government of the Caucasus, which, in assailing the independence of the Tekke Turcomans, creates the possibility of a collision or collusion with the Afghans.

I subjoin his article on Abdurrahman Khan, which appeared a short time ago in the official Tiflis newspaper, *Kavkaz*. It contains some very curious, if somewhat flighty, remarks about the "red-headed enemy," the alleged effeminacy of English

soldiers in India, and the "diplomatic guile" of Sir Henry Rawlinson.

* * * * *

"A recent telegram brought to Tiflis the interesting intelligence that Sardar Abdurrahman Khan, son of the late Mir Afzal Khan of Cabul, had fled from Samarcand to Afghanistan. Very little notice was taken of this circumstance in the Russian newspapers at the time, although it may exert a most powerful influence upon English operations in Afghanistan, and our own in the Turcoman desert. As, more than others, I was acquainted with Abdurrahman Khan during his period of exile, and knew his plans and opinions, such as they were, better than any one else, it seems to me not inopportune just now to say a few words about him to your readers.

"I will begin *ab ovo*. He is the legitimate Son of Afzal Khan, the offspring of a marriage between Afzal and a woman of ignoble blood, which many regard as a reproach to Abdurrahman. A capable man from his birth, he has never received any education, and can barely read and write Persian. After the death of his father, he ceased to fight with his rival relative, the late Shere Ali, since he had struggled only for the rights of his father, and did not wish to continue hostilities with the ruler who, after the death of Afzal Khan, was the legitimate sovereign of Cabul. The last skirmish between the two took place at Vezèeri, about thirty miles from Cabul. Thence he fled, first to Khiva, then to Bokhara, and lastly, in the spring of 1871, proceeded to Tashkent, attended by a numerous suite. At that period I was at the disposition of Governor-General Kaufmann. I was the only person who could understand the language of Abdurrahman Khan. Consequently, nothing he wished to say could pass through anybody except through me, and there was no Russian with whom he could be on more familiar terms than myself.

"His wish exclusively was to throw himself upon the will of

the Sovereign Emperor. At the time of the march to Khiva he begged permission to be allowed to accompany the Russian troops, but this request was refused him, as also the petition he sent in to be allowed to proceed to St. Petersburg to present himself before the Emperor. He is now thirty-six years old. Towards Shere Ali he never felt any enmity until the ruler of Cabul announced as his heir his younger son, Abdullah Jan. From that time, as the lawful heir to the throne, he displayed towards Shere Ali unrestrained hostility. When the news arrived at Tashkent of the death of the late Ameer, he presented the Russian Government a petition to be allowed to return to Afghanistan. To this the Government replied that he might go where he liked, and when he liked, and that no one would interfere with his movements; but, at the same time, he must understand that, in the event of any failure, he must not seek safety a second time in Russia, since he would have nothing to expect there in the shape of protection or support. Abdurrahman Khan secretly dismissed his suite, and lived quietly at Samarcand until the 26th of December, when he fled to Ferghana. Thence he had only to cross Karategin to reach Badakshan, where he knew he would find the generals who had formerly served by his side.

“Badakshan, by treaty concluded between Russia and England, is recognised as belonging to Afghanistan; but since, at the present moment, the disorders at Cabul have led to all manner of disturbances, not only in Badakshan and Koondooz, but also in the very centre of Cabul itself, the Chinese in Kashgar and Yarkund have put forward pretensions to Badakshan; obviously at the instigation of the English government. For us Russians, it would be more advantageous to have Abdurrahman Khan ruler of Badakshan than the Emperor of China. Abdurrahman Khan, disposed at the head of Badakshan, might easily extend his authority over Koondooz, and, in general, along the left bank of the Amu, over the territory Daria,

belonging to his late uncle the Ameer Shere' Ali. Such a combination could not easily be destroyed, and might with facility come to a head under the influence of an individual possessing such a wide reputation as Abdurrahman Khan. Moreover, he would never break off relations with the Afghan bank of the Amu Daria, because he used, in particular, to maintain a frequent and friendly correspondence with his brother-in-law, the Bek of the town of Sheebeer Khan; to whom, it not unoften happened, I had to write during my residence at Tashkent. Who knows but that, in the future, the Cabulese, oppressed by the English, may summon him to defend their feudal rights?

“That period, however, is still distant. We shall see, in the meanwhile, how his position—such as I have sketched it—will effect the issue of the Turcoman Question, which, apparently, is now about to enter upon a critical phase. The thought is far from me to explain the flight of Abdurrahman Khan; but I cannot withhold that satisfaction which I experience, as a Russian, at seeing the beginning of the fulfilment of those plans which the Afghan prince had in view. He, in my opinion, is above all things a statesman, and would never throw away a place of security for a shadow. I have already said, that for him to occupy Koondooz, Tashkoorgan, and even Maimene, would be attended with no difficulty, and might quickly be effected. In the event of this taking place, our Turkestan army, in case of necessity, would be able to cross a friendly region, and could receive supplies and protection from it. But what, if the English took Herat? That I cannot believe possible, knowing as I do the effeminacy of the English soldiers and sepoy in India. At Herat, the winter is far more severe than at Tiflis, because the locality is badly protected against the north wind, and a winter campaign is not to be thought of by the English. The fortifications of Herat, erected by Parfenoff, a Russian infantryman (at present

living at Barzil, about 100 miles to the north of Cashmere), previous to the siege of the city by Dost Mahommed, no longer exist; but it is interesting to know that Colonel Grodekoff learnt their condition during his visit to the place in 1878. If Ayoub Khan has done anything to protect the place from the red-headed enemy, he has not done so by the aid of Russian soldiers, but through the assistance of Persians and deserters from India. Herat cannot be allowed to be taken until we have settled our accounts with the Turcomans.

“ Since penning the above, intelligence has been received at Tiflis stating that the flight of Abdurrahman Khan has produced a sensation in London, and that a decision has almost been arrived at to occupy Herat. This is easily understood, since every family in England is more or less interested in Afghanistan. As is well known, the English send all their younger sons to serve in India and at the Cape. The *St. Petersburg Vedomosti*, referring to Abdurrahman's flight, speaks of the calumnies which this event has provoked against the Russian Government, on the grounds of the latter having instigated it. As a person well acquainted with the English, let me tell you in a few words how they regard the Merv question. The English—not the Londoners, but the residents of India—ardently desire, not less than myself, the junction of the Russian frontier with that of India. They imagine—but is this true?—that then, both Powers will join hands and proceed along the same path, diffusing civilisation over the extreme East; since no other course will be left open to them. In the opinion of the English, any march of the Russians against Merv is nothing more nor less than an absurdity; because, what will the Russians do when they get there? They will, of necessity, either have to raze it to the ground, or else establish themselves permanently there. But the former alternative is disadvantageous, because Russia is not in the position to cast away millions

in destroying desert towns, the population of which is only a few hundred thousands: while, in the second case, if the Russians think of establishing themselves at Merv, they must come to a settlement with Persia. What good would Russia derive from occupying Merv? On the one hand, it does not lie near the Indian frontier: on the other, an occupation of the oasis involves contiguity with a people turbulent and unrestrainable, with whom it is impossible to live in harmony.

“Rawlinson is not a diplomat, although he was once a diplomatic agent at Bagdad, and afterwards Ambassador at Teheran; he is an officer of the old East India army, and it is difficult to understand why he has put forth his views regarding the importance of Merv for the Russians and the English. He never was in Khorassan, and, therefore, knows nothing of the sands that environ Merv. The English with whom I have had occasion to speak on this score, ascribe his action to his diplomatic guile in leading the enemy into error, and withdrawing his attention from the direct road to India (!?) But, in leading Russia astray, he at the same time alarms the whole of London society, not to speak of the disturbance he creates in India.

“It will be seen on the map that the Russian empire approaches closest to India in the direction of Peshawur; so much so, that were the intervening region crossed by a railway the distance could be traversed in half a day. The country separating the two frontiers is about 450 versts (838 miles) across. The alignment of these is my constant fancy, because it is only then that we shall commence to play a leading rôle in the history of the world. By means of the railroad we shall be able to traverse defiles and passes impracticable hitherto, both to ourselves and to the English. Such also is the view of the English on this point, omitting, of course, the English diplomatists, with Rawlinson among them, who, with all their might,

endeavour to delay the junction of Russia and India. But Time looks after itself. It will lead us where we are expected to go, to spread civilisation among the people of the far East. Whether it will lead us to Merv or not, I cannot, of course, yet say.

“In Tiflis the opinion prevails that we cannot rest until we have punished the Tekkes, and that where Russian blood is spilt, there we ought to exact vengeance. To prove that such vengeance is not likely to be followed by pernicious results, people refer to Khiva, to the Kirghiz deserts, to Tashkent, and to Khokand, where with the bomb of the gun came civilisation, peace, quietness, and orderly living. I repeat, however, that whether we advance upon Merv or not, the results of the conquest will be *nil*.

“It is possible that Abdurrahman Khan may occupy the whole of the region up to the town of Chitral. According to what I heard while on the north-west Indian frontier, from Faizabad to Zeibek exists a good carriage road, constructed in ancient times. Beyond, to the south, extend sands running to the very foot of the Hindoo Koosh; the pass across which presents very little difficulty, and is called Nooksan, or ‘Fate.’ Its elevation is about 8,900 feet above the level of the sea. In recent times it has been considered dangerous for caravans, but it would prove no impediment to the Russians, who, in the depth of winter, crossed the Balkans. The succeeding pass, over the Himalayas, is of about the same height, and is dangerous for caravans; not so much on account of the physical conditions of the country, as by reason of the attacks of Kafir tribesmen. This pass is called the Lahore Pass. Beyond it lies the splendid Miankal valley, terminating on the left with Sivat-Bunar, and on the right with Peshawur. Along this route, 850 years ago, passed the troops of the celebrated Baber, the founder in India of the dynasty of the Great Mogul. The Chitral Pass, it is

true, has not been investigated by anybody in recent times, but in the distant past it served as the regular route for caravans between China, Central Asia and India, and is still designated, even to this day, on English maps, the 'Kashgar-Davan,' *i.e.*, 'the passage to Kashgar.' It is here that, sooner or later, the Gordian knot between England and Russia will be cut, and not at Merv. If at any time we should be compelled to wage war with England in Asia, the army of the Caucasus, in all probability, will play a passive rôle, and the principal part of the business will be achieved by the Turkestan troops, since the line of operations, in the former case, would be 1,500 miles from the base.

"Letters received by me a day or two ago, from influential personages at Samarcand, contain no reference to the flight of Abdurrahman Khan. They only mention that he 'has grown fatter and, apparently, lost a deal of his vigour.' This latter has been disproved by his flight, followed by that of his cousins Server and Eesaak Khan.

"Abdurrahman Khan is a man of medium height, rather stout, with a trimmed beard, a regular nose, and large black eyes. In type he is more like a native of India than an Afghan of the Barucksye family. He usually wears a Cossack tunic, trimmed with the gold lace of a Russian general's uniform. His appearance creates a favourable impression, and gives one a belief in his honesty. His speech is not broken, but very fluent, abounding with the flowers of Eastern rhetoric; and his voice is loud and agreeable. Such is the portrait of Abdurrahman when I knew him in Turkestan, and probably he has changed very little since. As regards his two cousins, Server arrived after my time, while Eesaak Khan was kept at Samarcand and not presented to General Kaufmann at all, on account of his natural imbecility. This defect excited such derision on the part of the boys of Samarcand, that they used to jeer and hoot him when he appeared in the streets, calling him

'Tintack-Khan,' or 'The Fool-Khan,' and it was not until the authorities advised him not to stir abroad without attendants, and took measures to put down the display of feeling, that the Afghan prince could leave his house without being subjected to insults."

FOREIGN MILITARY MISSIONS IN PERSIA.

THESE comprise Russian and Austrian officers; the former being engaged in drilling the cavalry, and the latter the infantry, at Teheran. The Austrian mission consists of twelve officers, commanded by Colonel Shanovsky, who receives 2,400 toumans a year, besides lodgings, free mess, and travelling expenses. The second in command, a Major, receives 1,500 toumans; the third, a Captain 1,200; and the rest of the instructors 1,000 apiece. The total number of troops placed under their command for training purposes is 1,400 men. Besides these twelve Austrian officers, there is R. von Gasteiger, a general of the engineers, who arrived from Vienna many years ago, and General Andrini, an ex-Garibaldian.

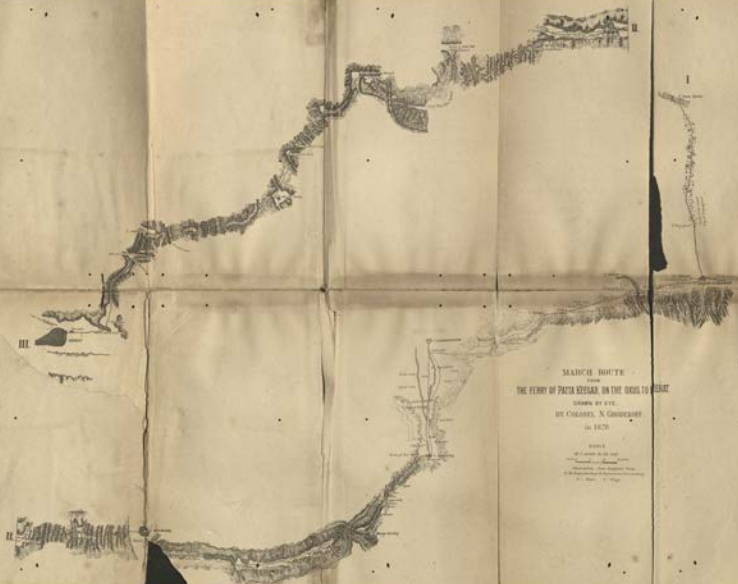
The Russian military mission comprises—

	Salary.
Lieutenant-Colonel Domontovitch	2,400 toumans
Captain Bratkoff	1,200 "
Squadron Leader Vweerooboff	1,200 "
Ensign Kookharenko... ..	1,000 "
Five non-commissioned officers, apiece... ..	180 "

All these officers belong to the Kouban Cossacks, and the 400 Persian horsemen under their command are being trained in the Cossack fashion. The saddles, accoutrements, and uniforms of the regiment, were purchased in the Cau-

casus in 1879. The Shah has taken such a fancy to the dress of the Kouban Cossacks, that he mostly wears it at his inspections of the troops at Teheran, and sometimes at court.

THE END.



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 IN 1878

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OF THE

DISASTROUS RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN

AGAINST THE

AKHAL TEKKE TURCOMANS.

DESCRIBING THE

MARCH ACROSS THE BURNING DESERT, THE STORMING OF
DENGEELE TEPE, AND THE DISASTROUS RETREAT TO
THE CASPIAN.

By CHARLES MARVIN.

OPINION OF PROFESSOR VÁMBÉRY.*

("Sir Henry Rawlinson, K.C.B., F.R.S., F.R.G.S., who presided at the lecture, on 'The Past and Future of the Turcomans,' at the United Service Institution yesterday afternoon, introduced Professor Vámbéry as the chief, if not the only, living authority on the subject."—*Times*, April 22nd, 1880.)

Buda Pesth,
The University,
April 4th, 1880.

Dear Sir,

I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your valuable volume upon the last Turcoman Campaign, and I must remark at once, that rarely has an acquaintance with the Russian language been so amply utilized for English political literature as in the present case; for all what you write is totally unknown to the public at large, and political writers, unable to read Russian, must be grateful to you.

I need scarcely say that I shall review your book at an early opportunity, and do full justice to your labours. In the meanwhile I must congratulate you, and beg to remain

Yours truly,

Mr. CHARLES MARVIN.

A. VÁMBÉRY.

On an inquiry being addressed to Professor Vámbéry as to whether he wished the above letter to be regarded as a private communication, he replied: "My dear Mr. Marvin,—It is with the greatest pleasure that I authorise you to make public my opinion on your book. You deserve it for your painstaking researches."

EXTRACT FROM AN ARTICLE BY PROFESSOR VÁMBÉRY IN
THE "PESTER LLOYD," APRIL, 1880.

"The Russian Press was well represented by a number of correspondents; yet, strange to say, their letters were kept back by the postal authorities until the close of the war; so that the Russian reader was only able *post festo* to learn a few details of this remarkable campaign, which might have remained totally unknown to the rest of Europe, had not the idea occurred to Mr. Charles Marvin to carefully ransack the entire Russian Press for the reports referring to the expedition, and to publish a *resumé* of his assiduous and clever labours in a book, bearing the title of 'The Eye-witnesses' Account of the Disastrous Russian Campaign against the Akhal Tekke Turcomans.' In this book we learn a number of wonderful things. First of all, the clumsiness of the Russian Colossus in fitting out the expedition; respecting which, it would appear, that thousands of soldiers were made to march through one of the most frightful deserts in the world in the middle of August, at a temperature of 150 Fahrenheit, without taking with them water, victuals, and what is most dreadful of all, without hospitals, medical stores, and other sanitary necessities—a carelessness causing, as might have been expected, the sacrifice of hundreds of warriors, without their having even come in sight of the enemy. In the second place, Marvin's book, which is based on Russian data, tells us of the wicked presumption and light-heartedness with which the Russian commanders rushed into an unknown country, against a powerful enemy, and sported with the blood of brave and honourable soldiers in a manner unheard of in the annals of war. The description of the route to Akhal makes one's hair stand on end. In comparison with it, the horrors of Sierra Leone are a paradise," etc.

OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

Review by Mr. Boulger in the *Academy*, May 15th, 1880.—"Mr. Marvin has brought to the accomplishment of his task an intimate knowledge of the Russian language, and considerable acquaintance with the political questions involved in his subject. He supplies the amplest details that anyone could desire of the battle of Dengeel Tepé, and explains with considerable perspicuity the blunders committed by the Russian commanders. His volume may be recommended for perusal on the ground that it gives a complete account of a war which is likely to take its place in history as one of the most memorable yet waged by Russia in Asia."

The *Examiner*, April 17th.—"Mr. Marvin's account of the operations is marvellously minute. His account of the battle is very spirited. He has done very good service in presenting the English public an account of the campaign, as well as in translating the valuable Russian criticisms and march routes in the appendix."

The *United Service Gazette*, April 17th.—"Mr. Marvin's workmanship betrays the touch of a true artist. A thorough master of both languages, his translation has all the vigour and lucidity of an original work, while the numerous plans and sketches with which his handsome volume is enriched, are as useful to his readers as they are creditable to himself and his publishers."

The Madras Weekly Mail, May 13th.—“The details of this exciting story are most effectively told by Mr. Marvin, whose mastery of the Russian language appears in his happy rendering of the most difficult idioms. His work is a valuable contribution to military literature.”

The Newcastle Daily Chronicle, March 27th.—“The first clear and intelligible account of the expedition that has been published in this country. It is most interesting throughout, and abundantly illustrated with portraits, plans, and maps.”

Allen's Indian Mail, April 29th.—“The whole story is full of interest, mostly indeed, of a melancholy sort.”

The Homeward Mail, May 4th.—“In these days of public meetings everybody knows the sensation of weariness which steals over the mind as speaker after speaker rises and continues to repeat the ideas of the leader of a debate; and most people have also experienced the grateful sense of relief which comes when, at last, some one rises who imports into the discussion fresh ideas in fresh language. Just such a feeling of relief will reward those interested in Central Asian matters by a perusal of Mr. Marvin's book on the Turcoman Campaign.”

Vanity Fair, May 1st.—“A very valuable compilation.”

Globe, April 21st.—“The manner in which the author relates this piece of current Asiatic history leaves nothing to be desired in point of lucidity and graphic force.”

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